A Colonial Witch

By FRANK SAMUEL CHILD

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Being a Study of the Black Art in the Colony of Connecticut

BY

FRANK SAMUEL CHILD

AUTHOR OF

"An Old New England Town"
"The Colonial Parson"
Etc., Etc.

THE BAKER & TAYLOR CO. NEW YORK

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BY
FRANK SAMUEL CHILD

To

FREDERICK STURGES

Whose Love

For the Town of His Ancestors

Has

Fruited into Many Works

Of Private Service and Public Benefit

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FOREWORD

THE belief in witchcraft has been widespread. It is only the last two centuries that have witnessed an emancipation from the strange delusion. During a period of threescore years dating from 1640, the Colony of Connecticut witnessed more than twenty trials for this reputed crime within her borders. There were at least eight "witches" executed in accordance with the law of the land. Mary Jonson, of Hartford or Wethersfield, in 1648; Mr. and Mrs. Carrington, of Wethersfield, 1651; Goody Basset, of Stratford, 1651; Goody Knapp, of Fairfield, 1653; Mr. and Mrs. Greensmith, of Hartford, 1662, and Mary Barnes, of Farmington, 1663.

Thirty years after the last execution in Connecticut the Salem tragedy occurred. But these trials and terrors were simply symptomatic of universal conditions. America was comparatively free from the scourge, although the Indians believed in witchcraft, and by their credulity encouraged the English settlers to yield unto the prevailing faith. It was Europe that suffered from the ravages of the Black Art. Not only were tens of thousands of poor wretches put to

death, but society itself seemed given over to ready belief in the awful delusion. The best minds of the civilized world accepted witchcraft as a horrible reality. Laws for its suppression were enacted and executed with an energy born of fear.

Mindful of such a fact, we are to show a kind and charitable spirit toward our ancestors when we see them scourged by fright into summary dealings with the people that they believed had intimate, personal relations with the Devil. The New England colonists were, after all, among the first Englishmen to revolt against this frenzy and disregard further accusations of witchcraft.

A Colonial Witch

I

Sapphira Laughs in Meeting

It was October in Paradise. The particular day was Wednesday, and it was all that heart could wish in respect to weather.

Paradise was the euphonious name of a town in the colony of Connecticut. It has little to do with the Garden of Eden or Abraham's bosom.

At nine and one-half o'clock by the sun-dial the drum was beating tumultuously, and the inhabitants of Paradise were making their moderate way toward the curious structure on the Green where they were wont to worship God according to the dictates of the Puritan conscience.

Conversation was subdued and infrequent in accordance with the spirit of the occasion. But scraps of it floated hither and thither upon the gentle currents of the air.

"This is fine Thanksgiving weather," quietly observed Goodman Hull as he was joined by Mr. Gold on the way to meeting.

"Yes, our worthy Governor Haynes was certainly led by the Spirit to appoint this perfect day as a meet and proper time for us to assemble and give thanks."

Drawing nigh the Green, one might have seen almost the entire population of Paradise, for it was expected that everybody would attend Thanksgiving service. Little persuasion was needed; people were glad to see one another, and public conferences were not so numerous that the attendants manifested any wish to stay at home. So the log-huts and the frame-houses were practically deserted, and the mixed population of men, women, and children passed along the open space in the middle of the village and entered the place of worship.

Every man carried his gun with its necessary furnishments. For the Indians hovered near the community, and any moment might mark some swift and treacherous assault.

A guard was placed before the door of the meeting-house, looking toward the sea. A second guard was placed at the rear of the rude structure, to keep an eye upon the fields and the woods to the north and west.

The people were seated according to rank and importance, the elders and deacons being placed in close proximity to the minister. The men and the boys were distributed on the right, and the women with the girls on the left of the pulpit.

It was a sober congregation. Few gay colors

appeared in the garb of the worshippers. There was rich apparel on the part of several leading individuals. But it was a quiet display, and it contained simply a modest reminder of the affluence which had been deserted in old England.

No sooner had the drum-beat ceased and the little door shut upon the people than Parson Johnes began the service.

There were to be three hours of thanksgiving. The parson would fain have made it four.

The harvests had been exceptionally bountiful. It would take a good deal of time to particularize in respect to grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Then it had been a year remarkable for the abundance of fish and other sea-food.

The hunters had also been blessed in their pursuit of game. Both flesh and fowl had enriched the fare of the community.

It was also to be remembered that the people of Paradise had enjoyed excellent health during the past twelve months. The parson had distributed less physic in proportion to the number of inhabitants than on any previous year of his ministry.

It was likewise necessary to recite the fact that general prosperity had tarried with the people through the months. The town was making progress in the things which represented community-worth and leadership.

But these were not the things that the good

parson had especially in mind as he prepared his discourse and made his abstracted way to the meeting-house. He was thinking that the people of Paradise should be particularly grateful for the reason that Satan had made no great inroads upon the community. For Satan was a real personage to the Puritan imagination, and the language of the Apostle James was taken in its most literal sense. There were not a few individuals in town prepared to take oath that they had seen his hateful majesty going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour. And the most particular ravages which the Evil One had in hand during this period had taken the form of witchcraft.

Parson Johnes was dwelling upon the subject when he took his place in the pulpit and when he gave out the first psalm. He was not able to dismiss it from his mind during the long prayer, recurring to the subject with varied phraseology. The Scripture which he expounded had something to say upon witchcraft. And when he came to the sermon, while he mentioned the other objects for which special thanks were appropriate, he dwelt upon the fact that no witch had appeared in Paradise.

Two of the neighboring towns had been afflicted with the scourge. Mary Johnson was believed to have been leagued with Satan in Windsor or Wethersfield, and she had been promptly executed. Goody Basset, of Stratford, was the second victim. This was coming close home, for Paradise ad-

joined Stratford. And when excitement ran high in the neighboring town, Parson Johnes gave himself to prayer that the scourge might be averted from his parish.

The occasion would have passed without further comment, however, had it not been for a trifling incident which was magnified into a thing of serious import. Master Johnes was recurring to the subject of witchcraft for the fifth or sixth time; he had pronounced a sonorous and impressive period; the congregation had responded with a painful intensity of interest, and fairly leaned forward in the rough seats to catch the most delicate accents of his earnest speech, when a little child whose name was Sapphira laughed a most uncanny and incredulous laugh. It is undisputed that laughter often does a task of revelation which words find it difficult to match. Spite, doubt, tears, anger, ridicule, mischief get into laughter not less than good-nature, merriment, satisfaction, or gladness.

To say that Master Johnes and his congregation were shocked when Sapphira's laugh resounded above the deep, emphatic base of the minister's discourse is a very tame way of stating the case. Had the meeting-house been struck by lightning the agitation and excitement would hardly have been greater. It is a fact that the preacher paused in his sermon. The sentence which he was pronouncing stood unfinished. In his wonder, nervousness, and embarrassment he turned five pages

of his manuscript. For a moment it seemed that the thread of his discourse was lost beyond recovery. There was a movement on the benches, a turning of heads, a rustling of clothes, an overflow of nervous tension. It seemed minutes that the minister stood stock-still in his place, with parted lips, confused eyes, and blanched cheeks. It seemed minutes that the shrill, vibrant notes of the startling laughter chased each other hither and thither within the four walls of the meeting-house. It was perhaps thirty seconds. For Hezekiah Blatchford, a shrewd and observant boy, watched the sands in the hour-glass. He remarked later in the day that he might not have many wits, but it would take something bigger than the laugh of that little minx Sapphira to make him lose the few he had got. There were only a few sands that dripped through the slender aperture of the glass while the congregation was lost in amazement over the performance of the strange child. And then the discourse proceeded. But it was painfully evident that Master Johnes had lost his hold upon his sermon and the congregation. He still continued to read with his usual distinctness, but his mind and heart did not appear in the words. The people still paid apparent heed to his message, but in truth they were thinking about the break in the discourse. It was a relief, therefore, when the parson omitted his conclusion and brought the Thanksgiving service to its end.

II

The Peace of Paradise is in Peril

Sapphira Hardy with her mother and brother hastened from the meeting-house and made a swift way to the seclusion of her humble dwelling.

The larger portion of the congregation tarried on the Green in order that they might discuss the incident of the morning. For all things else had fallen into the background of thought and conversation. What did that wild, rash disturbance of public worship signify? Was it a sign? Who would indicate the wise course to pursue under the circumstances?

Sapphira Hardy was a child only seven years old. It was hard to deal with such a culprit. And there was a possibility that the child herself was not to blame. She might be possessed of the Evil One. Some wicked spirit might have bewitched her. Or it might be that she was giving unconscious testimony to impending perils.

"I am constrained to think that the child was an instrument," observed Roger Ludlow. The lawyer of the community was a wise man, versed in all the lore of demonology. His opinion was received with marked deference.

"It seemeth to me," said John Hill, "that it was verily other than the child which interrupted the flow of such godly discourse."

"Yes, for the laugh was not the free and merry laugh of an innocent girl. There was the very spirit of the Black Man in it." Thus Stephen Banks expressed his opinion.

So the talk continued, and the people became infected with a nameless fear. When Master Johnes passed out among them it was observed that his brow was knitted in deep, perplexing thought, so that he took little note of the people as they bowed respectfully to him. It showed how harassed the good man was, for he was ever courteous and heedful among his people.

"Friends," and as he spake every person within the compass of his voice attended to his words, "I had thought to gather my family about my table this afternoon and enjoy the bountiful fare that God hath vouchsafed us this harvest season; but, alas! I am sore vexed and troubled. The interpretation of this circumstance weighs upon me. I will betake me to the beach and there wrestle in prayer. It mayhap that God will give me light so that I shall be enabled to direct you by wise and faithful counsels."

So the minister made his slow way down Beach Lane, and the neighbors formed into little squads and dispersed to their homes.

In order to apprehend the significance of such a trivial thing as the laugh of a child in meeting,

or the particular laugh of this particular child, we must consider the conditions of the age and the circumstances of the colony.

These people had migrated in order that they might have peace. The years in mother country which preceded their migration had been vexatious and stormful. For they were honest, sincere men and women, who sought with intense eagerness the good of souls and the prosperity of the Kingdom. It is true that they looked at life from one point of view, while their opponents viewed it from another; but when it came to results shown in character, the Puritan was the cleaner and better man. He might not be as agreeable and interesting as men with freer ways and looser habits. His sobriety, decorum, and religiousness might put him at odds with the world. Nevertheless he incarnated many fine qualities, and he illustrated very forcibly some of the noblest characteristics of the race. The persecutions in England were too much for these people. They anticipated relief and freedom when they reached New England. It is true that their ideas of liberty were narrow. It was liberty for themselves and liberty to worship according to their own mind. But there was nothing which merits criticism in such a view. They came to the colonies with a definite object, and they instituted a society that embodied their sentiments and purposes. It contrasted favorably with the society which anathematized them across the sea.

Take the matter of Sunday as an illustration. It had become a day of sorrow, riot, assault, and misery in the mother country. The King had insisted that it should be observed with all sorts of revolting worldliness—at least with a worldliness that was hateful and accursed for the Puritan. Corruption honeycombed church and state to such extent that disaster seemed impending. There came nothing but trouble and suffering to the men of pure doctrine, worship, and character. For such was the meaning of Puritan. The petty annoyances as well as the cruel afflictions to which these people were subjected because they refused to worship God contrary to conscience or join in the harsh and unworthy sports which degraded the observance of the Lord's Day multiplied upon them until they became unbearable. The day of sin and disturbance, of vanity and frolic, of private indulgence and public festival, of widespread crime and rampant infidelity was finally exchanged for a day that was kept after their own heart. Quiet was its pervasive feature. All work and play were laid one side. Thought turned to the higher concerns of life. The people gathered for the praise of God and regular instruction in the Bible. Conversation took a loftier tone. Rest was courted with fidelity. There came a certain refreshment and invigoration to body, mind, and soul. The very atmosphere of the day was serene.

Now such a day was one boon which the Puri-

tan sought. It may have fretted a restless spirit, an individual who was more or less indifferent to religion. But Paradise was planned and settled by men who loved that sort of thing. They came to the place for the purpose of building that kind of social fabric. The arrangements were made and life was outlined in accordance with such pattern.

It is evident that the people influenced by these ideals and purposes found life in Paradise sweet and uplifting. The sense of freedom was enough to exhilarate them. Independence was a common spirit, and yet it never ran into license. There was what might be called a community consciousness, which held in check any too free tendencies.

Then the land was fresh and persuasive. It invited tillage. What a satisfaction there is in coming into contact with rich virgin soil and reaping the first generous harvest that responds to enlightened cultivation! The pleasure is enhanced when one's neighbors are all engaged in the same honorable competition. Honest labor in the field, amid the unique conditions of pioneer conquest, with prevailing gladness for the bloom which is upon nature—what has sweeter enticement for tired and hunted men of simple Christian faith?

And there was absence of dress vanities which serve to disturb and poison weak humanity. Clothes were substantial in texture and simple in manufacture. There were more important con-

cerns to consider than the kinds of dress which people wore in the wilderness.

The little town was yet untroubled by social frictions and perplexities. Fraternity was manifest in a thousand ways as men engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life. One and another neighbor turned his hand to help the brother by his side. Christian reciprocity was an instinct as well as a conviction of faith. So this community of interest and activity bound men into a real oneness of daily life. The vices which they universally hated and reviled did not flaunt themselves before them as had been the case in England. Crime was almost an unknown thing. Justice was meted out in a simple, candid way. The small trials incident to neighborhood relations were adjusted with a commendable fairness and unanimity. The reaction from intimacy with distress, indulgence, wickedness, and persecution was so marked that life seemed for the nonce like a sweet, bright dream.

There was infinite variety to the climate, so that the changes which people sometimes cultivate through social activity were given in the fresh form of atmospheric differentiation. The scenery was beautiful. For land and sea were woven into fretwork, while hill and plain, wooded or cultivated, contributed an alluring diversity. Flowers were scattered with bewitching prodigality through the fields and forests, the very marshes yielding a richness of exquisite blossoms

that fairly dazzled the eye of the hunter as he pressed his quiet way through them. Old trees had their stories to tell, and invited the friendship of men. Their shade in summer and their angular movements in winter did something to interest or instruct the people that looked upon them with appreciation.

But, best of all, Paradise rejoiced in a vital and genuine experience of religion. The meeting-house was the centre of this vigorous spiritual life. But the parson himself was, humanly speaking, the secret of the fine rare product of soul.

Master Johnes had been a man of mark in the Old World. He was gifted in various ways. As a scholar, for example, he stood among the first of his university. For a time he had served as Fellow in Emmanuel College. He earned his degrees of B.A. and M.A. by faithful study. And when he was appointed to a fat living connected with the university, it was felt not only that he was highly favored by the authorities, but likewise that he deserved all the honors and privileges bestowed.

His popularity was as marked as his scholarship. And it was popularity not confined to one class or one sex. He was a courteous scholar among scholars, so that he won and retained their friendship. He was a gracious and affable gentleman among the rich and the poor, so that he commanded their confidence and affection. In

his associations with the gentler sex he showed himself a master in the trivial, delicate kindnesses which contribute to social enjoyment. He was the very soul of geniality. The ability to adapt himself to individuals and circumstances was manifest. And he possessed that gift of insight and sympathy which enables one to read the heart like an open page. Master Johnes was a sincere and honest gentleman, but nature had enriched him with a degree of sentiment and a fineness of perception which combined with other notable qualities to make him especially attractive to the ladies. He was a born courtier, and yet Providence had ordered that such gifts must never shine in royal circles. The true heart, the gentle manner, the loving concern, the rare sensibilities, the fine taste, the cultured intellect, the broad sympathies, the power of adaptability, the command of social graces,—these gifts were all destined to shine in the forbidding territory of pioneer struggle.

But one is not to think that this parson lacked robust qualities. He was an extraordinary example of an all-around man. The son of a gentleman, born to the opportunities of the best life in England, inheriting a strong constitution and made rich in physical capital by out-of-door life, he had learned, as other men of his class in the home country, how to combine a scholar's achievements with vigorous, exuberant health. If this particular result had never been in mind, his train-

ing had certainly insured it. For as a young student he was quite as well known for his large frame, great strength, and handsome features as for his thorough scholarship, wide knowledge, devout spirit, and gallant conduct.

Friends had forecast a notable career for him. His station and attainments were such that the church was bound to advance him, while his social virtues and attractions were of a character that must commend him to a people especially susceptible to this form of influence. It was all the more remarkable, therefore, that he became tainted with the heresy which cut him off from fairest prospects. He had made the acquaintance of Thomas Hooker at the university. Together they had traversed considerable theological and ecclesiastical territory. The result might be termed disastrous to Master Johnes. For a time came when he felt constrained to leave old England and risk his fortunes with the emigrants to Massachusetts Bay. Other friends joined him in the venture,—friends of good standing, fair property, and university training. They had tarried for a season at Concord, and then they came down through the wilderness to Hartford, and on to Paradise. For it had been told this scholar and preacher that a parson was needed in this latest settlement, and friends had made him feel that the wonder-working Providence was preparing a place for him.

He was very welcome to the new field. Old

friendships were revived on his coming. For it was discovered that several of the settlers knew him in the mother country, while all had learned the story of his unrest and his renunciation. Happy, indeed, were these people to greet such a laborer, and submit themselves to the counsels and instructions of a man so worthily famed and so eminently competent.

One of the first things which they did on his coming was to ordain him anew to the pastorate of the church in Paradise. For his Episcopal ordination in England did not count on these shores. And this ordination was performed at the hands of the Paradisians themselves. They called no neighboring minister to give them help. They simply met in solemn council of the church, examined the man in respect to doctrine, then engaged him to minister for life unto the needs of the parish. They voted him an ample allowance, gave him a small farm, promised to help him build his house, and thus Master Johnes was inducted into the service. From that day to the day which especially engages our attention he had put himself into parish tasks with a fidelity and enthusiasm that brought large returns.

The town had been settled by men of excellent parts. The pioneers of Paradise, like the pioneers of New Haven, were men of substance. It was therefore, in a sense, congenial people among whom Master Johnes found himself. He was by no means the only man of education in the parish.

His associates were quite his equals in respect to station and culture. They represented the better classes, some of them gentlemen, several of them university graduates, all of them men of thought, experience, family.

Among these comrades must be named Roger Ludlow. He had founded the town, and his spirit pervaded the place. He was a man eminent in various ways. Indomitable energy, restless ambition, powerful intellect manifested themselves in him at an early date; so that it was difficult for him to brook contradiction, and he was one that must hold in hand the various affairs of public concern, else troubles multiplied through his suggestion or encouragement. Nevertheless he was truly a great man, and the indebtedness of the colony to him was large. He had reached the limits of his influence and authority at the time when this narrative takes its rise. Master Johnes counselled with him on all matters of church and state. He was certain to seek him ere any public reference to the interruption of Thanksgiving service was made from the pulpit.

Mr. Gold was another friend that had become closely identified with the life of the young town. He likewise often sat in counsel with the parson, and shared in all the responsibilities for the guidance and prosperity of the people. A man of wealth and honours, he was tireless in his zeal and service for the benefit of the people. His spirit was not arbitrary and overbearing, like that of Lud-

low. He was therefore better liked and more respected. Urbane manners, noble dignity, generous impulses, kindly interest,—these were his characteristics. His judgment was mature and charitable. A man of hopeful spirit and lofty instincts, he was much sought in confidence when troubles came into the home or the community. One might be assured that prejudice or animosity would never sway him. A great heart beat within his breast. He had suffered for conscience' sake, and he had learned pity, tenderness, toleration.

Now these men gave tone to the life of Paradise; and there were others like them. As we make their acquaintance it will be observed that there was abundance of sterling manhood in the community. It justly prided itself, this Paradise, upon the many strong men within its borders.

One likes to dwell for a moment upon the privileges and enjoyments of this early settlement in the colony. It is not such a life as we should choose for ourselves. It had many difficulties and vicissitudes. Nevertheless it possessed something of charm and fascination.

The angularities of the Puritan character might detract signally from the ease, the gracefulness, the comfort of community fellowship; conversation might be devoid of brightness and merriment; the social spirit might find itself restricted to the channels of home life and the meeting-house; yet it is not too much to say that this

subdued experience, this lonely, retired activity, this uninteresting and monotonous exile admirably suited them.

For a time the earnest people that crossed the waters and endured hardships enjoyed it. Any break in the serene flow of such a life was a most serious matter. During the years that had passed since the town was settled there had never been an interruption to the peace of her people. Such events as the loss of cattle, a skirmish with Indians, some misunderstanding with a neighbor settlement, a new royal or unroyal charter, a plague of disease, or a loss of crops might have a certain importance, but they did not ruffle the community spirit. The parson had imparted some fair measure of his own good-will and lofty sentiment unto his people, so that, while they were Puritans, they were yet men of a real fraternal mind, yielding to the instincts of genuine friendship. It was because nothing had come to destroy the tranquillity of Paradise through these years that people responded with awful foreboding unto the interruption of meeting on Thanksgiving day.

III

The Pastor Makes a Call

A curious thing occurred on the morning which followed Thanksgiving. Mrs. Johnes was walking down toward the Green, accompanied by her child Esther. Sapphira Hardy and her mother were passing on the other side of the street. They were not far apart, when Sapphira made some remark to her mother, and then there rang through the crisp air of the clear October day that same unnatural laughter. Goody Hardy looked into the eyes of the minister's wife with something of fire and snap in her expression, curtly said, "Good-morning to you, Mistress Johnes," and hastened on her way. Meanwhile Sapphira, firmly held by the strong grip of her mother, continued to toss her head, twist her little body, glance over her shoulder, and break into shrill, strange laughter.

Esther Johnes was a playmate of the child who disturbed the Thanksgiving service. Many an hour had they spent in their quaint comradeship. For the children were as unlike as it seemed possible to make them. But on this morning no words passed between the playmates. Sapphira

was in disgrace. Her mother showed anger, suspicion, and hatred.

But the curious thing to which reference has been made was not so much the meeting on the street as the consequences which apparently ensued. It was not an hour ere Mrs. Johnes was ill. True it is that the minister's wife was panic-stricken on the day before, when her husband stopped in his discourse. And the feast, which she had prepared with genuine Thanksgiving hospitality, had been untasted by her lips. All through the night she dwelt upon the scene in meeting. The child's laugh kept repeating itself in her restlessness and terror. So that when Sapphira and her mother appeared on the street, Mrs. Johnes was in a condition to have her fear or indisposition aggravated. This was the result as the two mothers and their two children met. And yet how inexplicable was the occurrence!

Now this was the thing which impressed itself upon the mind of the minister's wife. Some baleful influence touched her and she was prostrated by its force. Some people might have said that she was overworked and nervous, so that she simply yielded to these hard conditions. It might have been suggested that an insidious disease had taken this opportunity to show itself. But this was not a satisfactory explanation. Mrs. Johnes was under a spell. She said: "I am tormented." And from the hour when she was stricken her decline was rapid. She prayed

with ceaseless desire that God might tread Satan under foot. For it was apparent to all that the Adversary was the enemy chiefly concerned in this affliction. And yet she made no accusations against neighbors, and she continued to speak with becoming reserve upon the Kingdom of Darkness and the works of the Prince in authority.

Meanwhile, on a day appointed for such visitation, Master Johnes made his slow, meditative way to the humble house of Goody Hardy. Ere public notice was taken of Sapphira and her levity, it had been considered best that the minister should have a private interview with the child and her mother. Master Johnes had come to feel that he had been gravely rebuked for his sins. Just what might be the character of these sins was not definitely settled in his mind. But he was inclined to blame himself, far more than little Sapphira Hardy, for the interruption of his sermon. He was a modest man, and charitably disposed. He did not like to think that the child must be punished in any public way. So he reflected upon the matter as he knocked upon the door of her home.

Now Sapphira was a queer child. She had something of her mother within her personality, and certain traits of her poor father showed themselves on particular occasions. But some far-away ancestors seemed to have larger rights in her composition. She was odd, bright, strong; she was crafty and mischievous; she loved flow-

ers, poetry, gay colors and music; there was never a fibre of diffidence or fear in her; she courted peril, storm, excitement, nature with tireless enjoyment. If there was any individual in Paradise that would dare to laugh in meeting it was undoubtedly Sapphira. Kind-hearted neighbors said that the child was high-strung and ill-trained, sadly nervous, and not well balanced. With such charitable speech they tried to shift the burden of her pranks and the shame of her hoydenish behavior to the shoulders of her forebears. But Roger Ludlow had observed, with characteristic force and frankness, that the little minx was more likely possessed of the Devil.

Sapphira came by her name on this wise. Her father, Jeremiah Hardy, was a very religious man. He was meek like Moses and patient like Job. There were times when the neighbors mildly jested with him by saluting the man as Job-Moses. In respect to these cardinal virtues he was the startling antithesis of his lively wife. It had been said that they were an ill-assorted pair. This, however, was a misstatement. They were distinctively complemental. He was a Puritan, and she a world's woman. He read the Bible, and she read Shakespeare. He talked with precise distinctness, and she chattered with a rapidity and intenseness simply confusing. Jeremiah Hardy preferred sober garments, quiet manners, hard work, and a religious atmosphere. His wife liked all the gay things of life, the flattering and

stilted courtesies of the Cavaliers, the entertainments of Merrie England, an atmosphere of sport, frivolity, indulgence. It was while they tarried in Holland that they mated. Her life prospects had been blasted. It was with a sort of feeling that it might be her last chance that she accepted this man. They were married, and then circumstances compelled them to cross the sea to America. They were led to Paradise by a friend, and here they settled with the other emigrants.

One feature of Dutch life Anne Hardy transferred to her home in the wilderness. That scrupulous neatness upon which the housewives of the Low countries pride themselves approved itself to the young housekeeper. Her home was small and humble, but it was distressfully neat. When Jeremiah came to the house from his field he was compelled to doff his footgear and enter in his stocking feet. And furthermore, Jeremiah was not permitted to press the small door-latch with his dirty hands. The elbows, supposedly clean, were made to do hand service, and push gently the simple contrivance which gave admission to the room.

It follows, as a matter of course, that this young husband, mild, faithful, reserved, was too good for this world. He gave up the ghost after five years of domestic training. But there had come into the family two hostages of fortune, a boy called Ananias and this girl.

There were times when the wife was controlled

by the husband. The giving of Bible names to the children was an example. Jeremiah was firm on this point. When the boy came the mother yielded the point on the condition that she might pick the name. There was a spirit of mischief in her eyes when she told the parson, with becoming gravity, that she liked the name Ananias, for it reminded her of childhood. Had she not been called Annie? And they might not have a girl in the family.

But when the girl came to them she refused to name the child until the moment of baptism. "It shall be a Scriptural name," she said snappishly to her husband. So, when the service was in progress, and the parson asked the name of the child, this strange mother whispered in the ear of her pastor, "Sapphira." There was but one thing to do, and that was to proceed with the baptism. But Master Johnes was stricken with a sort of prophetic panic. The name seemed to trip on his tongue. He stumbled and stuttered. When he spake it, the customary rotundity and sonorousness of voice were lacking, and very few people knew what the child was called. So Ananias and Sapphira became members of the Hardy family, and Anne Hardy had the curious satisfaction of obeying her husband in giving Scriptural names to her children, and at the same time reminding him that she hated and anathematized that sort of thing. The husband and father in this family died through sheer weariness. At the time this

narrative takes its rise he had been resting in his near-by grave for several years. The widow struggled along as best she might between the upper and nether millstones of pride and poverty. By dint of hard work, rigid economy, and narrow fare she had kept the family together and eked out a scanty, painful living. Some trifling interest came to her from the estate, so that with her home and slender means there was sufficient capital to make her in a small way independent.

It was a severe dispensation of Providence that forced Master Johnes to visit the widow Hardy, under the circumstances described. The task was one that even a braver and better man than the minister might feel hesitation in attempting. For this bereaved and lonely woman was not an ordinary person. It was not easy to deal with her. Abundance of mother-wit, a quick insight and subtle instinct, a tongue notorious for its sharpness, a fearlessness and an aggressiveness that were masculine rather than feminine, a command of English and a use of emotion whose limits were beyond computation, such was Goody Hardy.

When the parson reached her door he had framed the inquiries which he desired to put. Knocking diffidently, he waited with something akin to sadness and perplexity while the small commotion within the house subsided and the mistress appeared at the door.

"I bid thee good-morning," said the minister with stately courtesy. "I trust that a merciful God looks upon thee and thy children with favor."

Now this was a speedy, albeit indirect method of approaching the concernment of the occasion. And the minister was in that restlessness and trepidation of spirit which pressed him to discharge his mission at the earliest opportunity and withdraw from the scene.

"Reverend sir, thou art welcome." A reply which was true enough, and given with genuine cordiality. For Goody Hardy had known the minister in their mother country, and she held him in great esteem. It did not make his task any the easier that this woman had counted him a long-time friend, and had expressed her confidence in him by various trusts and numerous consultations.

"It seemeth to me that the winds which come to us from the sea this morning are freighted with odors of old England. I am back again in the parish church. Methinks I hear you read once more the prayers I love."

"I pray you, friend," interrupted Master Johnes, "think not upon those days of trouble and harassment. Rejoice that we now tarry in a land of peace, where worship is free, pure, and simple."

"Yes, too simple altogether. I hate it." The parson knit his brow and shook his head in stern disapproval during her brief criticism. "But your worship will be seated," continued the host-

ess. And she waved her hand toward the only vacant depository of the human frame that was visible.

Now the parson felt it was necessary to be seated in order that he might properly compose himself for the inquiries which he was to make and the lecture which he felt constrained to deliver. As he had thought out his conclusion, it was to the effect that Sapphira required a more rigid discipline at home. The uncanny laughter must have been simply the overflow of her too riotous nature. He did not like to think that any deeper meaning attached to the occurrence. He had succeeded in persuading himself that it was neither a "sign" nor a "witness." For it had been suggested by Roger Ludlow, and argued with remarkable skill, that it was a "sign" of impending evil, a "witness" to the presence of malign spirits. As Master Johnes reflected upon the sorrows of the woman and the difficulties which beset her; as he called to mind her wit, skill, vivacity, power; as he rehearsed unto himself the many bright things said by the child, and the many kindnesses that mingled with her wild frolics,—it seemed to him that the best explanation to make of that serious interruption on Thanksgiving morning was the one just upon the surface. Sapphira had simply overflowed. She meant no harm. She could not have realized the heinousness of her offence. She would doubtless pledge her word that it should never

occur again. He preferred to lay the event to the credit of nervousness. So he had prepared to rebuke both mother and child with becoming severity, and thus dismiss the matter.

A procedure of this sort conducted by the minister standing in the middle of the room would assume a perfunctory and magisterial character. He purposed to give the occasion a sort of social aspect. He would speak with becoming familiarity, and temper his speech with such gentleness as the scene evoked. Not that he desired to be lenient, or gloss it over, as something of no consequence. It was a matter of great import. People must never interrupt the preacher while he delivered his message in the pulpit. Laws had already been framed in respect to wanton gospellers, the sinful men or women who dared to contradict or disturb the minister in the public exercise of his prophetic office. But Master Johnes did not wish to put little Sapphira into this category and condemn her to public shame. It was more in the spirit of a father and friend than that of a judge that he entered upon the execution of his repugnant task. So he looked about him for a seat. Furniture was rare and scant in the colony. Tables, stools, benches, chests, bedsteads—these were the principal articles. And the house of Goody Hardy was even more scantily furnished than the houses of her neighbors. It chanced that on this brilliant October morning the living room was bereft of all available chairs and benches.

A solitary stool of diminutive size was conspicuously set before the front window. The widow was engaged in bread-making, so that she necessarily remained upon her feet. As the hostess bade her guest be seated, it flashed across the mind of Master Johnes that there might be something of covert intention in this state of things. For he was generally made to feel his welcome by the privileges of a certain stately, yet comfortable chair which had come with these people across the water. But his favorite customary seat of dignified comfort did not appear. He was loth to suggest that his hostess bring him the chair from some unseen retirement, for her hands were covered with dough. He did not like to go searching on his own responsibility, for it would appear unseemly and undignified. It was evidently foreordained that he should sit him down upon the low, small stool.

There was a furtive look of sly humor observable upon the countenance of the woman. Her visitor was a large and well-knit man, six feet and two inches in height, with an abundance of solid flesh. It was not a fear that the small receptacle would break beneath his bulk. For furniture was well built those days, and this stool was a very robust article. But it was a keen sense of incongruity that disturbed the parson. However, he placed himself upon the article, completely hiding the modest structure, so that he had the appearance of sitting in cramped and distressful position

upon impalpable air. The effect is more readily imagined than described. All solemnity and decorum seemed thrown to the winds. One could never pursue for long an important line of thought or discourse with any earnestness and power upon moral lapses or social peccadilloes. The circumstances were not favorable to protracted and serious speech upon any theme. And no sooner was Master Johnes seated, with his knees looking awkwardly into his bent-over face, and his arms swinging perilously near to the shining floor, and his ample coat-skirts voluminously disposed about the legs of the stool, than a gay, wild child, whose head was crowned with autumn leaves, and whose mouth was pursed up with uncontrollable laughter, appeared at the window and gazed with rapt attention into the little room.

"I came to speak with you concerning Sapphira," and the minister commanded himself and his condition as best he might.

"Yes, yes,—plague take the child," replied Goody Hardy.

Now this was pursuing the object of his visit on what might be termed a low level. Had any other person used such language to the minister he would have been inexpressibly shocked. But, as has been suggested, this woman was one apart from the ordinary company, and she was not afraid to express herself with characteristic force in conversation with her pastor. This frank style of speech seemed to amuse Sapphira to such ex-

tent that she burst into the merriest kind of laughter. There was nothing unnatural or suspicious in that free and hearty sound. The child was still peering through the window, taking in every detail of the interesting scene, treasuring up all the motions and accents of the two people, as though she had never more than a passing delight in the occasion and were not herself the subject of this significant visitation.

The minister was at length constrained to turn toward the child and call to her. But this was a thing she did not like. So she flew away like a bird let loose from a cage, and soon the sweet notes of a psalm floated down from the red and golden foliage of a maple tree that stood guard on the street before the door.

"I fear me, widow Hardy, that you are all too lax and weakly indulgent with your child."

"Bethink you, sir, what can be done to manage our east winds. Then I shall know what nurture and contrivance to use with that child. May God bear me witness" (the light and humorsome tone had given way to one that was tragic in its pathos and misery), "I am tossed in mind beyond endurance. The world is against me. My children give me nothing but trouble."

This was not the course which Goody Hardy purposed that the conversation should take. But her mercurial nature vibrated between laughter and tears. For a moment she might give way, but she was quick to recover herself, so that ere

her visitor had opportunity to reply she was recalling old days, naming friends of the early years, wondering how they liked Cromwell, and questioning in respect to the latest news. Her talk was like the descent of a small mountain torrent. It moved with such swiftness, it fell with such force, that all opposition was swept from the path.

So it occurred when Master Johnes had borne the punishment of sitting on the stool until such time that necessity bade him change his posture, and readjust himself to the trying conditions, a large part of his energy had been dissipated, and he felt neither in the mood nor the atmosphere to continue his pastoral admonitions. The child evaded him with the sportiveness and cunning of some frisky animal that has been partially tamed. At one moment he heard her in a tree. Then she reappeared at the window. Later she peeped through the door. He looked toward the sea, and she vanished on the beach. He might just as well seek to hold a sunbeam or chain a whiff of wind. So he laboriously gathered himself, and emerged from the state of semi-collapse in which he had spent the time of his call upon the widow Hardy.

"I pray you do not hasten, honored friend!" exclaimed the woman. "I do most sincerely desire you to give me such counsel and guidance as may be needful in my sorrowful circumstances. Sapphira is wild and passionate, disobedient and

mischievous. I fear me she is too much like her wayward and unhappy mother. And sometimes, sir, I am thinking that the Evil One himself is nigh us both. Alas! that I must confess it."

Clear and shrill upon the ears of these two people sounded the voice of the child again:

"Double, double, toil and trouble—
Fire burn and caldron bubble."

It had a weird influence over the minister and the woman. Both yielded to it for a moment; then, as Master Johnes moved toward the door, they threw off any visible effect of the strange superstition suggested by the verses, and parted with such advice as seemed meet for the occasion.

IV

Ananias will be an Indian Sachem

The people of Paradise had friendly relations with their Indian neighbors, yet there were occasional episodes which disturbed the even flow of comity. The savages had been trained into wholesome respect for the white man by the events connected with the Pequot war. And the influences of the great chastisement continued to check any marked infringement of the rights claimed by settlers. When the Indians came to Paradise, as they were permitted to do in accordance with popular vote, they had the privilege of tarrying just a few hours of the day. When night drew on apace they were banished from the civilized precincts.

There was the same fascination connected with the life of these savages in the early days of settlement as there was through the later periods. People gazed with peculiar interest upon the fantastically-garbed denizens of the wilderness. And boys felt the wondrous attractions of that free, untrammelled life which was associated with these strange human beings.

It was not many days after Thanksgiving that

several Indians gathered upon the Green one morning for purposes of trade. They wanted knives, beads, rum, kettles, and other luxuries. They brought in exchange for these the usual supply of wampum, fur, and corn. A little company of children gathered about the traders and watched the curious transactions. Among the onlookers was Ananias Hardy. He had reached the age when Indian adventure makes special appeal to the susceptible imagination. There seemed to him no other life quite so attractive and happy as the life of these Indians. Did they not go hither and thither at their own sweet will? And were they bothered by the hateful restrictions of town laws? Never a Sunday meeting to attend. No mid-week lecture to endure. The smallest and compactest baggage in case they wished to travel. All the privileges of possession without any of the responsibilities pertaining to civilized society. Such thoughts as these flitted through the restless mind of the boy as he gazed upon the barbarian traders. So he decided to exile himself from the hated restraining civilization about him and become a child of the woods.

When the Indians had finished their exchange of commodities they gathered their substance and departed. Ananias stealthily followed them as they struck into the northern trail. He began to feel the joy of freedom ere he had passed the skull-shaped hill that had often been used by various tribes for their signal-fires.

What stories of warfare and havoc had been recited in his ears? Did his blood curdle at thought of the tomahawk? Was he afraid of the unerring arrow? Could it be possible that he might ever submit to torture? Never! These phases of experience simply interested him as they concerned others. He was too smart and cunning to get caught in such traps. In spite of all that had been said against these people of the wilderness, he preferred them and their ways. All the tales of massacre and treachery contained no terror for him. He had visited the swamp on many an occasion when the chance came to slip away from home. Captain Mason's account of the Pequot fight had been learned almost by heart. He knew just the position of the savages and their assailants. He could tell the numbers of emigrants and aborigines engaged. He could describe the brief, wild conflict with a good degree of accuracy and picturesqueness. But it was the savages which excited his sympathies, and not the people of his own race. He wished that the diminished band of bold redskins had gained the victory. He wished that he could have seen the struggle and done something to stem the tide of Indian disaster.

Ananias never heard the story of kidnapped boys among these inhabitants of the forests that he did not wish he was one of them. And what dreams of adventure came to him! He saw himself adopted as the heir of a chief. His race su-

periority would make him a desirable member of the chief's family. He imagined how the rank and file of the poor Indians would treat him with vast respect. As Ananias trudged bravely into the woods he beheld himself already an honored sachem among them, surrounded by an obedient and faithful company of savages. He would take them to Paradise, surround the town, and seize Roger Ludlow and a few other prominent citizens who were especially offensive to himself and his mother. These individuals should be carried back into deep recesses of the wilderness and kept in perpetual confinement, forced to live on roots, berries, and other scant, unpalatable fare. The rest of the people would be permitted to return to their old home in England or join the Indian tribe of which Ananias was chief. Sapphira would marry some great sachem of the west. So the boy builded his air castles, and thought of the lively times which were coming when he was in control of the wilderness, and white men, not less than red men, should count him great and powerful.

Meanwhile the boy grew tired and hungry. He found it difficult to thread his way through the forest. For darkness settled down upon him, and the shadows kept stealing into his way and obstructing his progress. He stopped now and then to rest, or quench his thirst, or pick up some late apples that were scattered along the way. And then the loneliness of the scene impressed him. He was not afraid. The boy had a stout

heart. He cared naught for any assault. But it came to him suddenly that he was unarmed, so that when he heard the screech of the panther he felt his first misgivings in respect to the wisdom of his course. It also occurred to him that bears prowled around in the night. For many a fine, fat piece of live stock had been lost from Paradise through the onslaught of these hungry brutes. And the mean, fierce, skulking wolves were visitors that made occasional descent upon domestic animals, and even attacked the solitary traveller. Then Ananias remembered that rattlesnakes were thick in the section which he was traversing. He was not sure that they bit people in the night; but it made him feel uncomfortable to think that he might possibly have one of them for a bedfellow, did he throw himself upon some moss-bank or bed of hemlock boughs. And it grew dark and lonely while these thoughts flitted through his mind.

The young adventurer had probably turned him about and hastened back to Paradise at this point of his pursuit had not the light of a fire in the distance encouraged him to proceed. He was evidently drawing nigh to the object of his search. Down among the trees by the little river, close under the rock where they were accustomed to crush their corn, he found the Indians encamped. As he advanced among them they manifested stolid indifference. His was the first voice to break the strange reserve.

"Me become Indian—live with you. Hunt and fish together. A great chief." As he introduced himself with these brief words, one of the men came forward, motioned him to a place near the fire—for it was a nipping air—and then withdrew with several of the company for consideration of the case. They had seen the boy in Paradise. They were not seeking encumbrances or entanglements of the sort suggested by his coming. And, furthermore, they knew that men from Paradise would start in search of the boy ere twenty-four hours had passed, and that the first place in which to seek the runaway would be the Indian encampment.

These savages had learned wisdom in their dealings with white neighbors. They might feel restless and rebellious on various occasions. Yet the friendship of the English was an offset to the enmity of the Mohawks, so that there came to them a certain advantage through their relations with the settlers. Therefore the larger portion of the various tribes (and there were fifteen hundred red men in this part of the colony) continued to cultivate the good offices and the kind dispositions of the pioneers. A kidnapped boy or a runaway boy would bring nothing but trouble to the Indians. It was a clear case to them. So they gave Ananias his supper, and then prepared a bed of boughs and skins for him, where he soon fell asleep.

Once only did the boy awaken during the night.

He had forgotten his adventure. The approach of a panther roused the encampment, and Ananias opened his eyes upon the strange scene. The animal had been brought low by the arrows of the hunters, and when he fell from the place where he crouched in a tree his end was greeted with a grunt of approval and satisfaction on the part of the savages. For a few moments the dusky forms flitted hither and thither amid the shadows, the fire cast its lurid light over the little wigwams, the dead leaves rustled in their discontent, whispering winds spake reservedly of unseen spirits. And the boy had a taste of weird, fantastic life in the woods.

Meanwhile a fair degree of excitement prevailed in Paradise. When Widow Hardy prepared her supper of rye-bread, roasted apples, and milk, Ananias did not appear. This was an unusual thing, for the boy was constitutionally hungry, and it seemed impossible to satisfy his growing appetite. Promptness at his meals might have been considered his chief virtue. So his mother immediately inferred that something serious had occurred. Sapphira, who had the keenness of observation worthy a woman of age, threw light upon the subject by remarking that he had probably gone to be an Indian.

"Child, what do you mean?" asked the mother.

"Oh, I saw him skulking along behind the feathers and blankets on the Green this afternoon. Mother, let him go. It'll do him good."

"But, Sapphira, he will be lost in the woods. It isn't the Indians I fear. There are wild beasts, and he has no food, and his clothes are thin. Alas! that I must be tormented on every side!"

So the distracted woman hastened to the minister's house to take counsel with him.

Now it was really a serious matter to be caught at night in the forest without means of comfort or protection, and the aimless, solitary wanderings of a child eleven years old was a very perilous thing. Vast stretches of woodland extended back to the interior. It was easy to lose one's way, and push deeper and deeper into the trackless wilderness. Wild animals haunted the borders of the settlement by night, choosing the shelter of the darkness when they committed their depredations. And while the Indians were friendly to a degree, one never felt certain what hatreds might show themselves or what revenges might be executed upon defenceless people.

As soon as Widow Hardy gave the alarm, therefore, to Master Johnes, the parson set about rousing the village. Within the hour a company of fifty well-armed citizen-soldiers had gathered on the Green. Several individuals had observed the boy as he followed in the wake of the Indians, so the conclusion was reached that he would be found in their encampment. This made the question of pursuit and search an easy one. Yet it was deemed wise to divide the party into three

companies, the larger one to follow the trail of the Indians, the other two to go toward Norwalk and Stratford respectively, and make such investigations as seemed necessary.

It was a brave band that thus divided itself and struck straight into the forest. Well armed, warmly clad, provided with food for an absence of twenty-four hours, they made their start in good spirits. Albeit one must recur to the fact that there was no enthusiasm in this search for Ananias Hardy. He was one of the youngsters that Paradise might well dispense with. He made more trouble than half-a-dozen ordinary boys, and this particular incident was a fair illustration of the disturbances which he succeeded in creating. Any mischief that could not be traced to other sources was sure to find its explanation in him. He was enough to embroil a whole community and keep it in a state of chronic quarrel. Had the boy been lost beyond recovery the people of Paradise would have manifested a sweet and lovely spirit of resignation. While the matter was in doubt, however, they were moved by common humanity to make diligent and faithful investigation of his absence. But truth compels the historian to record that, during these hours of suspense, Ananias' mother was afraid that he was lost, while her neighbors were afraid that he was *not*.

The uncertainty was not for long, however. Just as the gray of morning shot across the sky,

the middle company of men came upon the wigwams of the Indians. A quicker march might have been made, but the searchers took great pains to make as thorough a search along the way as the darkness of the night permitted, and there were occasional haltings for counsel or refreshment.

The Indians had bestirred themselves ere the search party was upon them, and they had honorably determined to return the boy to Paradise on the advent of the day. Two of their number had been chosen to accompany him home and make necessary explanations. The boy still slept when his rescuers arrived. There was never a gun fired or any act committed that had the color of conflict. It was a quiet and commonplace interview between the white men and the redskins. The one told the object of their visit; the other explained the situation, and indicated their purpose to return the boy. There were mutual expressions of confidence and goodwill. The two races consented to smoke a pipe together. Then the boy was awakened and passed over to his keepers.

There was a certain air of importance clinging to Ananias as he made his way homeward with the neighbors. Had he not stirred up the village? Were not fifty men scouring the wilderness on his account? Did they not tell him that his mother was wild in her distress? And he had occasioned all this commotion. Life seemed worth living

to Ananias on that morning. It was a question whether he might keep the same mind for the full course of the day, or change to another mind by time of mid-day sun.

Their return was greeted with curious interest. The mother was doubtless grateful, but there are various ways of showing gratitude and affection. Widow Hardy did not fall upon the neck of the boy and clasp him to her aching heart. It was evident to her that Ananias had simply played one of his pranks. Her emotions were running in a coarser channel than that of sentimental grief.

They brought the young culprit to his mother's door, and there he was delivered over to her charge. And she proceeded, on the instant, to spread the youngster across her lap, as she seated herself on the doorstep, and there, in the presence of his rescuers, administer such a spanking as few mothers have the will or the power to achieve. His voice of wailing was lifted up on high, and communicated to many of the neighbors the fact that the lost was found. It was a fresh way in which to announce such recovery. But it was deemed satisfactory; no one dissented with the exception of Ananias himself. This sort of welcome was repugnant to his whole nature—it disgusted him. But it was a brawny arm that his mother wielded, and he had learned to make a virtue of necessity under trying circumstances. So he submitted

with such grace as he might command. And when the home greeting had been properly administered, mother and son arose from the doorstep and vanished within the walls of the cottage.

Sapphira was not in an amiable mood on this eventful morning. The wakeful and distressing night had jostled her out of all adjustment to her surroundings. Not that she was used to other environment, and needed mountain air or change of scenery to calm her nerves, but simply that her sensitive and high-strung nature seemed clean thrown off the balance. Laughter and tears mingled. She hugged Ananias, and then she bit him. At one moment she was impertinent and saucy to her mother; at the next she was soothing her with gentle words and tender caresses. June and November mingled indiscriminately in her conduct. And then she suddenly disappeared from the scene, and was observed jumping over the graves in the adjoining burial-place. Who could account for the impulses and actions of this anomalous child?

The chastisement on the doorstep was not the end of the matter for the truant boy. As the whole town had been aroused when his absence was noted and as there was more or less anxiety in respect to the character of his wanderings, the townspeople had a genuine concern in any discipline that might be administered. The Indians of the neighborhood were living on terms of

friendship with the citizens of Paradise; but there was considerable restlessness among the larger and more distant tribes, so that reports of outrage and massacre prevailed, and had a tendency to make every English settlement fearful and vigilant. The thought that Ananias might have been captured and carried away into captivity was not especially offensive to Paradisians. Had he been the only individual involved, they could have submitted to the event as a wise interposition of Providence and quite in the order of His sovereign decrees. But the disappearance of the boy might signify further annoyance or assault. It might be a sort of forerunner of more disastrous and tragic events. It was this reflection that agitated the men and women of the village. During this one night of his absence the town was in such a state of unrest, distrust, alarm, fear, that sleep was banished, and the people remaining in the village passed guardedly from house to house, keeping close watch for the return of their rescue parties, and keeping an eye open for any surprise that might be sprung upon them through a sudden advent of these wily denizens of the forests. It is easy to see, therefore, what must have been the state of mind in the morning when people discovered that they had suffered all these dread feelings in consequence of the undutifulness manifested by a mischievous and disagreeable boy. There was an instinctive de-

mand that the town itself take hand in the infliction of penalty. This was one of the occasions when a whipping-post commended itself to the common consciousness and the plain good sense of a whole community. The constituted authorities acted in the matter without unnecessary delay. It was felt by everybody that the quicker the boy was subjected to the public lash the better for his morals (what he had) and the more advantageous for the peace of the community.

The whipping-post was a simple contrivance, set in the ground on the Green opposite the meeting-house. Near it was the pillory. Now it was a praiseworthy fact that these instruments of punishment were seldom used in Paradise; for the good reason that the people were a well-behaved and peaceable class, and they had safe-guarded the community against any inundation of disorderly individuals. Trade with other towns had not become so large that the relations were intimate. The general tone of life in Paradise had been in happy accord with the suggestive name given to the settlement. Minister and magistrate were watchful in respect to all which fostered decorum, sobriety, duteousness, and good character. Public whippings, therefore, were not the common affairs that they became at a later period in the history of the town.

But this particular punishment was inflicted

by universal consent. So when the time appointed drew nigh, the Green held a large proportion of the townspeople. It was the hour succeeding Wednesday lecture. Master Johnes crossed over from the meeting-house with his congregation. The people formed a circle, with the whipping-post for central object. The boy was led into the place of punishment by the officer in charge. He was fastened to the post by means of strong cords, the hands and legs being carefully bound. Then there came a hush in the proceedings. Master Johnes pronounced a short homily on the sins of disobedience and contumacy, concluding with an earnest appeal to Ananias that he behave himself and help his mother. Then the lash fell upon his young shoulders with a vigor and swiftness that elicited genuine tears and cries for mercy.

But the allotted number of lashes were applied ere the faithful officer of the law stayed his hand. He had not been cruel in his infliction of the penalty. His strokes had been tempered with a paternal consideration for the youth of the culprit. A disturbed and harassed town, terror of Indian attack, a night spent in beating up the woods and searching for a lost child, all the vexation and trouble incident to such experience—was it not meet that such a mischief-maker should be taught a lesson not to be easily forgotten?

So Ananias was made to see that in this case

the way of the transgressor is hard. And it was with some good purpose to mind his mother and behave himself that the boy returned to his home.

But this was not the effect which the incident had upon Anne Hardy and Sapphira. They were angry. The mother walked the floor of her humble abode like a caged lioness. Sapphira climbed a big tree on the Green and witnessed the whipping from a respectful distance. When the boy returned to the cottage there came one of those curious transitions in the mood of his mother, and she shook him in her anger as though she held the whole Puritan community in her grip, and would dislocate every organ and member of the little body politic. It was not so much a repetition of punishment visited upon Ananias as it was a necessary outlet to her uncontrollable passion. The boy's teeth chattered like a shaken pan of dry peas. He became as limp and nerveless as a piece of wet cloth. When the mother let go her hold upon him he dropped to the floor in a heap.

It was at this stage of the home reception that Sapphira entered. All the womanly sentiment of her young heart stirred within her. She ran to her brother, seated herself by his side, put his head in her lap, fondled him with all the gentleness of a sweet, innocent child, covered his face with kisses, soothed him with infinite tenderness; then suddenly dropped his head

upon the hard floor with a reverberating bang, sprang to her feet, faced her mother, and exclaimed:

"Shame on you! The Black Man will have your soul!" The child stamped her feet with indignation. Her voice was shrill and passionate. She shook her little hands wildly. Fire blazed within her dark eyes. Ere the mother could make any resistance, and while she stood rooted to the spot in her bewilderment, Sapphira flew from the house and disappeared for the rest of the day.

The boy lay blubbering upon the floor. His mother picked him up, carried him to the adjoining room, and placed him upon her bed. There was a sudden overflow of humanity or maternal affection. For she set herself to give the consolations that a mother can bestow on such occasion; and soon the boy was fallen asleep, and quiet reigned within the walls of the Hardy cottage.

V

Winter in the Home of Parson Johnes

Master Johnes farmed it. The town did well by him when he settled as minister in Paradise. The salary was one hundred pounds. There was also the home lot, southeast of the Green, where he, with the help of the people, built his house. And then he was enriched by the town gift of a farm. So he was a well to-do man in the community.

His life was varied with an interesting diversity of pursuits. Undoubtedly Roger Ludlow was the chief man of the town. A learned and versatile lawyer, a gentleman of wide reading and large experience, an authority in politics, business, theology, morals, the founder of the town, the framer of the code for the colony, lieutenant-governor and general adviser to local and colonial society, he exercised a sway that might have been as beneficent as it was at one time widespread and important. But he was a man of such temper that he could not brook restraint or opposition. It was very easy for him to embroil himself with neighbors. As a consequence he was not a popular member of society, and his leadership was hampered.

Master Johnes was his intimate associate in town, and the two men canvassed all the interests of village, colony, and federation with keen judgment. But when it came to a question of personal influence and social guidance, the ascendancy rested with the parson. It is to be remembered that Master Johnes came from the gentry of England, and that he embodied the refinement and culture which prevailed among his class at that period. A gentleman of excellent parts, he adjusted himself to his new and straitened circumstances in the New World with ready wit and brave spirit. So when he learned that farming was one of his numerous vocations he bent his skilled intellect and athletic arm to the cultivation of the soil. He did creditable service in these rural pursuits. His land soon yielded him fair supplies of rye, corn, peas, potatoes, and similar commodities. His cattle were numbered with the village herd, carefully guarded by the town herdsman, and led each day to the distant pastures on the hillsides and along the little dales that coursed their way down to the seashore. He had swine that lived in the woods and grunted down the highway when they yearned for the better fare of civilization and sought the luxury of corn-meal and loppered milk. There were two or three sheep that kind friends had given him. They wore his brand on their wool and shared the lot of the common flock under charge of the sheep-

master. A lamb of the fold was sacrificed on periodic occasions. Then Master Johnes gave a quarter of the creature to some neighbor, who returned the compliment at a later date. The wool was made into yarn and knit into thick, warm stockings.

Master Johnes enjoyed this familiarity with nature. There was something of the poetic temperament about him. To be sure, ploughing, sowing, hoeing, harvesting, gathering his apples, making his cider, gave a sort of prosaic flavor to the days; but the out-of-door life was sweet and restful, despite the hard work associated with it. The mind of the parson was often clarified and strengthened by such comradeship with nature. He was observant enough to read many a lesson in the play of the forces about him. His robust health, active service, rough endurance stood him in good stead through various trying circumstances; and people felt that he was thoroughly a man among men, versed in all the trivial lore which had to do with domestic and rural affairs, interested alike in weather, crops, cattle, trade, the court, the school, the meeting-house, and the events of the day. We must not think of such a man as a narrow individual, cramped in his ideas, poor in his experiences, a scholastic living apart from his fellows, a preacher unfamiliar with human need and trial. Master Johnes was a match for his con-

temporaries in old England or New England when it was a question of scholarship. But he was likewise a match for his next-door neighbor in respect to the management of his orchard, the cultivation of his fields, and the sale of produce. Necessity made him a man of numerous affairs. And he lived in comfort and plenty during the major part of his ministry.

It is also to be remembered that Master Johnes brought with him into his new home many of the refined tastes which sprang from his social station in the mother country. He was a clergyman of the Church of England. He was a Puritan, but his Puritanism did not necessarily involve a separation from the Established Church. The fact was that he loved portions of the service. He was not opposed to liturgical worship. Neither were many of his associates. It was the prelatical element which offended him. He came to America to avoid it. When he found that the logical result was dissent from all established forms and an extemporaneous manner of conducting public worship, he accepted the situation without comment. The principles for which he suffered were such in importance that subordinate considerations had little weight with him. He made no opposition to a new setting apart to the ministry when he was inducted into the parish of Paradise. This was in accord with the fresh order of things, and therefore accepted without question. His Boston and

Hartford brethren had set the example. The sense of freedom, the joy of pure worship, the privileges of peaceful growth in spiritual life,—these things more than compensated for the refined orderliness and the stately diction peculiar to the Book of Common Prayer.

Yet there were times when Master Johnes yearned for the gracious and tranquil ministrations of that order which was now despised and rejected by his brethren.

Life in the home of the parson was notably serene and exemplary. Esther filled it with sunshine; and John, the son of Mrs. Johnes by her first husband, supplied the tonic element. This John was one of those willing, happy, active boys that must be given something to do. He was no mischief-maker like Ananias Hardy. But he was full of life, and it demanded an outlet. The school, the farm, the fishing, the gardening, the work about home, and the opportunities for public labor (building roads, watching cattle, searching for stray animals, cutting trees), —these things kept the youngster busy, so that he was counted a thoroughly model boy. When winter came there was a variation of services, but each season had its peculiar interests and privileges.

The autumn, with which this narrative opens, proved a very short one, and winter closed in sooner than usual. Master Johnes was a forehanded man, however, so that he was prepared

for the first snow-storm in November. He had a goodly store of grains, vegetables, and fruits on hand. There were twenty-five barrels of cider in his cellar. His live stock was securely sheltered. Hay filled the mow and stood in stacks by the barn. The poultry was fat. The pigs were waiting to be converted into palatable form. The quarters of beef had been properly cured. The ceiling of the kitchen was decorated by abundant pieces drying in the genial glow of the great fire on the hearth. The whole place had an air of plenty, good-cheer, and substantial worth quite at variance with the mistaken notion in respect to the poverty and narrowness of those times.

The minister's house was a well-built and generous structure, two stories high. The front door opened into an entry. At the rear and on the right of it was the roomy kitchen, filled with sunshine when there was any sunshine to be caught. The big fireplace with all its necessary equipment was the conspicuous object of attention. A solid table stood in the middle of the room, and a second table adorned the space between two windows looking toward the sea. There was a settle by the hearth, six chairs placed stiffly against the walls, a couple of dressers filled with pewter plates and other shining utensils, and a chest pushed back in the obscure corner. This was the living-room. Here there was a scene of almost ceaseless activity.

The kitchen gave tone and character to the whole domestic economy and arrangement. In the front of the house and on the right was that sacred and seldom-desecrated apartment named the parlor. Back of it was the room euphoniously styled the parlor bedroom. It was used by Master Johnes and his wife as their sleeping-room, while the parlor was graced likewise by an elevated, high-posted, much-befeathered, and voluminously curtained bed. The room opposite the parlor was the place where the parson did his brain-work. Here he kept his accounts, arrayed his beloved books, wrote his sermons, advised the people that sought his help, conducted family worship, bartered his produce with neighbors, catechized the children and servants, and did such other service as fell to his lot. The fireplace was wellnigh as large as that of the kitchen; its capacity was something enormous. One never appreciated it until a cold snap plunged the family into the unwonted energy required for the feeding of the fires. John was kept busy from daylight to darkness. There were days when he could not spare time to shovel snow and make paths. Although the fireplaces were not as numerous in the house of Parson Johnes as they were in the more elegant mansion of Parson Davenport of New Haven (who had thirteen of them), yet the five were a large enough number to demand constant oversight and nurture.

These old-fashioned fires may be counted one of the important means of grace in the life of two centuries ago. Master Johnes took care of the one in his room, and it required the attention and indulgence of a spoiled child. When it was started in the morning it would occur now and again that the draught was poor. This was the result of wind blowing from the wrong quarter. It was one of the things to which a man learns to submit with aching eyes and flushed face. Thus early on a bitter morning, with a damp, easterly wind blowing fresh against his corner of the house, did this peculiar discipline begin. He was down upon his knees before the coals and the smudge ere he had been upon his knees in prayer. For prayer on one's knees when the thermometer ranges ten degrees below zero in a room is one of the exercises that may be considerately postponed to a more convenient season. At length the coals gave something of their vitality to the fresh wood placed upon them, and burst into a reluctant blaze. Thus encouraged, Master Johnes rubbed his hands to excite circulation, flung his brawny arms against his rotund form, walked hastily up and down the room, keeping an eagle eye upon the treacherous flame. Then the fire flaunted itself feebly in the air and suddenly sank into inanition. The good man seized the bellows and applied artificial wind to the enterprise. Alas! this action seemed to incense the

wood, for it spit great volumes of smoke into his face, making him cough as though he had a consumption, and driving him ignominiously from the spot. Circulation of blood was excited by this time, and a peculiar heat began to play up and down the back of the parson, extending its ramifications to his legs and even to the tips of his fingers. A brief respite, during which time he breathed hard and the breath congealed under his nose, making a crystalline decoration for his upper lip, was followed by a renewed attack upon the sullen wood.

On this particular morning in December (it was the twenty-fifth) the battle was not half fought out ere he was summoned to breakfast. His hands were somewhat stiff, he wept an occasional tear (there was no emotion behind it), and after the customary blessing he seated himself to a hurried meal. For the temperature of the kitchen was not conducive to any long-drawn-out repast. John had succeeded in persuading the wood to burn upon the hearth; but it was a selfish fire. It did not throw out much comfort. So the family sat shivering through the meal, and were glad enough when they might rise from their misery and return proper thanks. It was the custom to precede the breakfast with morning worship, but on this occasion a change in favor of the hour after the meal had been made. This was done through courtesy to the feeble wife.

The lesson was read and expounded, albeit the teeth of the family continued a suggestive accompaniment to the exercise. Then all stood up through the prayer. It was short for the times—not more than twenty minutes—but it was long enough to chill the delicate frame of the drooping goodwife, so that its conclusion was the signal for putting her to bed and the application of hot things within and without. Under the faithful ministrations of the children and Tituba, the domestic, warmth returned to her body, and she rested composedly within her bed.

Meanwhile the parson had returned to the study, and given himself with renewed zeal to his courtship of the fire. The room itself had assumed the odors and general conditions of a smokehouse, and the uninitiated would have gazed around him in search of hams. Into this atmosphere the parson was compelled to shut himself. Once more he fell upon his knees before the hearth and applied all his skill to the quickening of the reluctant firebrands and the smouldering wood. A fair measure of success rewarded him, and he rose to his feet, brushed the dust from his clothes, wiped his aching eyes with a cloth, and coughed the cough of the just.

But it was cold in the room, and the atmosphere was so thick that it seemed impossible to give one's mind unto study. However, this was the hour when the parson read his He-

brew, and he was not the man to give way under ordinary difficulties. So he set himself to this regular task. But the fire again demanded his attention. Little heat came into the room. It was as though the smoke had entered into a conspiracy with the heat, and they had mutually agreed to change places or functions—the heat to go up the chimney, and the smoke to push forth into the room. The Hebrew became dim and puzzling to the student. His eyes refused to submit to such treatment. This drove the parson to his hearth again. He poked and nursed the fire, he readjusted the sticks, he drew away the ashes, he gathered the coals into a shining heap and brought them into fresh contact with the wood, and then he tried to instil into the thing the very breath of his own mouth. At last the courtship was victorious. The fire burned. For there had come a slight change in the wind. Now the chimney was filled with a roar. The wood snapped and sizzled and sang. It threw great tongues of flame into the room and licked up the stray smoke. It drew with such fury and demanded such quantities of food that Master Johnes must needs make repeated journeys to the woodpile and replenish the heap by his fire-side.

And this was the way that he spent the morning of this twenty-fifth of December. He oscillated between his table and his hearth, or between his study and his woodpile. When the

noon meal was announced a good appetite rewarded his manifold exercise, and a spirit of masterful self-control evidenced itself in his tone and manner.

What a strange scene stretched before him as he gazed out of his windows! The Green was sheeted with the fresh-fallen snow and the trees had absorbed some portion of its whiteness. Each simple house had been banked with fluffy drifts. All trace of walk or road had disappeared. The leaden skies hovered close above the landscape. And then the stealthy winds began their frolics. What sly and cunning pranks they played with each other—these unseen messengers of the air! How they tossed the snows hither and thither in downy heaps; how they shut in the cattle, and defied the weak and futile motions of the shovellers, and made havoc with steeple-hats, wide-spreading cloaks, and other personal gear! The town seemed literally buried. It was a question whether it was possible to get dug out ere spring came with its gentle enticements and won nature back to fresh beauty and fruitfulness.

One might think that such a storm was an inappropriate season for the spirit to leave the body and fly away to the skies. The denuded soul, thrust into the inclement, tempestuous weather, must yield to such cruel assault and sink to earth. And when the spirit is thus denuded, is there not an indefinable sense of shiv-

ering dishabille which clings to the imagination? And yet how appropriate is the season for the translation of a pure soul! All nature clothed in driven white. The winds swift and strong to do the bidding of the silent death messenger. Songs of triumph sounding their encouragements through the air. A kind of tempest chariot catching up the soul, something as the chariot of fire transported Elijah.

Is was just at eve, when the storm was spending its last strength, that Master Johnes walked into the bedroom and found that his consort had gone away from him. The rugged days of pioneer life did not afford opportunity for the cultivation of polite maladies. People could not afford to be ill. The demands upon strength and activity were too strenuous for it. So they resisted or "kept up" to the last. In Paradise there was no physician. Master Johnes was better versed in the art of healing than any other citizen. And Widow Hardy had studied herbs to such purpose that she was deemed the most efficient nurse in the community. But in the case of Mrs. Johnes there was nothing to be done. She availed herself of no help other than the tender nurture given by husband and family. The Widow Hardy was never admitted to her presence. Her name brought a hectic glow to the cheeks of the minister's wife. It was evident that the woman of herbs could do nothing for her.

Mrs. Johnes simply faded away. When the storm raged and darkened the skies, and suggested the presence of unseen hosts, she laid one side her frail mortality and passed into the stormless life of heaven. All through the day gentle ministrations had been given her. And she had rested uncomplainingly upon her bed. When the great hour struck she had fallen on sleep with no word of warning or farewell, silently departing into the unseen realm.

Word was carried to the neighbors, and they ploughed their way through the snow and came with the kind offer of their services to the minister. Mrs. Gold took possession of the house and prepared it for the sad occasion. For be it understood that a funeral was the supreme function of society in the early history of New England. And the official relation which Master Johnes bore to the town made the event one of extraordinary importance. The children were comforted as best they might be. One and another task was appointed to helpful friends. John Hill went home to make the coffin, for there were no undertakers to serve the dead in Paradise. John Burr agreed to dig the grave. Roger Ludlow said that he would supply the mourning clothes and appointments. The good women along the street discussed among themselves the funeral feast and divided its responsibilities.

On the morrow the minister's house was filled with sympathetic workers. The few prints and

pictures were draped with black. The windows were darkened. The gloves, scarves, rings, ribbons, and weepers were arranged for service. The home was pervaded by an atmosphere of activity, concern, good-cheer, subdued courtesy, generous hospitality. The snow might gather itself in vast heaps and present a formidable obstacle to all neighborliness, yet neighbors were never intimidated or repulsed by such opposition on the occasion of a funeral. They bravely surmounted every difficulty, discharged every duty, and entered with commendable heartiness into the event.

The hour of burial was four in the afternoon. All day long the men of the town had been shovelling a path to the burying-ground and making the road measurably passable. The minister's house was almost hidden amid the snow. It reached to the second-story window on the side toward the Green. And the front door was guarded by a drift fifteen feet high and twenty feet thick. Through this mass of solid whiteness the path-makers tunnelled their way, so that a kind of triumphal arch gave entrance to the premises. The road across to the adjoining field, where the people of Paradise laid the dead, was irregular in its course and subject to various undulations. The grave had been hollowed out of the frozen soil, then lined with compact flakes of crystal beauty, the very clods of earth assuming varied shapes of spotless pureness.

When the friends gathered for the solemn office of the dead the house was filled to overflowing. The big kitchen, fragrant with roasted meats, abundant fare of various kinds, and the usual prodigality of liquid refreshment, was the central object of interest. The guests having been properly fortified against the nipping cold of the day, the rings, the gloves, the scarves, and the weepers having been discriminatingly awarded, the hearse or bier (a simple frame for the coffin carried by the bearers) having been placed in front of the door, the black velvet pall having been given to the men chosen to carry it above the coffin, the body was taken from the house, the mourners followed, and the people of the parish, in the order of their importance and station, fell into line, and all walked to the grave. Not a word was read or spoken on the occasion. Prayer over the dead was esteemed a Popish thing. Drear and sombre voicelessness was the order of the ceremony. As the black-garbed company passed underneath the white arch before the parsonage there was a strange, weird beauty manifest. And as the procession wended its circuitous and broken way between snow-walls and over snow-hills and into snow-depths, more than one friend thought upon the dazzling whiteness of the scene as a true emblem of the life into which this woman had passed. But Master Johnes was thinking, among other things, of the time when he had

laid the dead away in old England and read above them the beautiful and comforting words of the burial office. And as he remembered early days, sad thoughts multiplied upon him, and there entered his heart a protest against the desolation of the hour.

For when they came unto the grave there was a sad and awful silence. The form was deposited in its resting-place; then friends cast the hard soil upon the coffin, making it to resound with hollow, wordless utterance, the mourners meanwhile standing watchful in their places until the soil was once more returned into its accustomed spot and the new-made grave was rounded to its top. Then the company returned unto the house from whence they came, and people gave themselves up to such feasting and fellowship as made the day die for them amid associations and remembrances characteristically agreeable and satisfying.

There was one member of society in Paradise made conspicuous by her absence on this occasion. When Widow Hardy volunteered her services Mrs. Gold and Mrs. Burr stated frankly to Master Johnes that the courtesy must be declined.

"You know," remarked Mrs. Burr, "that Widow Hardy was offensive to your wife. And doubtless had she deemed it wise and best your honored consort could have revealed dark things concerning that woman."

"I will abide in your judgment," humbly replied the bereaved husband. When this unfortunate woman proffered aid, her pastor kindly explained that all was being done that the services of sympathetic friends had it in their power to do. So the lone woman was made to return unto her home with angered and rebellious spirit. For it was evident that the hands of her neighbors were lifted against her, and the coming days boded evil.

The staple subjects of conversation on these funeral days were the ordinary matters of provincial life. As men drank flip and toddy they discoursed upon crops, storms, town affairs, ecclesiastical events, or latest news from the mother country. The women exercised their minds upon domestic concerns and the infinite small talk that passes current as gossip. But on this day both men and women discussed with bated breath, the strange death of the minister's wife.

It was remarked that Mrs. Johnes was stricken on Thanksgiving Day, and it was known that the interruption of the sermon had given her a great shock. It was no ordinary word or action that could have wrought with such disaster upon her mind. She had freely said to neighbors on that very day that the wild, elfish laughter of Sapphira Hardy was the work of an evil spirit.

The occurrence which ensued on the day following Thanksgiving was quite in keeping with such interpretation. For it was remembered that

when Mrs. Johnes and Esther met Widow Hardy and Sapphira on the street, the eyes of the widow flamed with baleful light, and the minister's wife returned to her home in a condition like to that of a charmed bird which flutters and cries ere it fall into the devouring mouth of the snake which has charmed it. It was easy to fix the date of the good woman's decline. From that day to the day of her sudden, unheralded exit, Mrs. Johnes had drooped. And when it had been proposed that the simple skill in nursing peculiar to Widow Hardy be employed for Mrs. Johnes, the sick woman refused such help with a vehemence and passion altogether foreign to her gentle nature.

Little had she said to friends respecting this antipathy, but it was well known the feeling prevailed, and that much which concerned this matter was locked within the breast of the minister's wife.

Mrs. Johnes had reported the fact, however, that on a certain night in October a large black cat suddenly came down her chimney as she sat on the hearth. The fire was low. No candle was burning in the room. But the eyes of this supernatural creature blazed with a lurid, blinding light, so that the room was singularly illuminated for a moment, and when Mrs. Johnes screamed in her terror the animal disappeared in the darkness. Now it was known that the Adversary had a way of showing himself in the

guise of a black cat, and no one who knew about this experience of the minister's wife doubted that the Evil One himself appeared that night and cast a spell upon his poor victim. Not many nights later she had wakened her husband that he might listen to the uncanny voices which floated down upon the air. There was a mild breeze blowing, and suddenly it seemed that the air was filled with a company of shrill-voiced people. It made one's flesh creep. The minister's wife had recognized at least one voice. No name had passed her lips. But when she whispered the tale to Mrs. Ludlow it was with an unchanging conviction that she herself was the special object of torment, and that it was a vain thing for her to resist the machinations of the Evil One. Rather than make any accusations, however, she had bravely submitted to what she considered the inevitable, and the price of such submission and silence was her death.

This was the absorbing topic of conversation as the many friends of the minister partook liberally of the substantial good-cheer provided for their entertainment.

"And did you see Sapphira Hardy in the burying-ground?" said Mrs. Ludlow. "The little shrew had wrapped herself in a red blanket, and there she sat boldly on the top of the highest snowdrift, gazing down upon the coffin like some bird of prey that soars aloft ready to dart to earth and catch up its unsuspecting victim."

"I greatly fear me that our days of peace are done," exclaimed Goodwife Hill. "And this household hath been chiefly afflicted."

"Grave responsibilities are decreed unto us," continued the Governor's wife. "Our much-stricken pastor will need our tenderest and most faithful watch-care. For it beseemeth me that this late activity of the Evil One is directed against his godly service."

Now this was a form of sacrifice and ministry that especially commended itself to the womankind of the parish—the exercise of oversight and watch-care in respect to the shepherd of the flock. And there were many earnest and sympathetic souls prepared to enlist in this service, so that the responsibilities might be divided, and they would not weigh too heavily upon any particular individual. This discussion of Widow Hardy was the first indication that the women had already settled to their work and entered upon the office designated.

It is not too much to say that the men were just as deeply concerned in this matter. For the sufferings to which the minister's wife had been subjected — the terrors that had visited her by night, the torments which visibly distressed her by day,—these all were known to the town, and only one explanation had been suggested. It was no ordinary case of illness. The dread visitation which had appeared intermittently down through the ages, and which had

recently been making such havoc in Europe, was come to Paradise. Did not Roger Ludlow have such a thing in mind when he prepared the Code for the colony? The appearance of witchcraft on this side the Atlantic was well attested. It had shown itself in Hartford, Windsor, Stratford of the Connecticut colony. The evidences were unmistakable that the criminal spirit was actively at work in the beautiful and beloved town of Paradise.

VI.

THE WIDOW HARDY LOSES HER TEMPER DURING PRAYER-TIME.

Master Johnes was engaged in making his round of pastoral visits. The regular order brought him at length to the house of Widow Hardy. He was seated in his favorite chair before the hearth, and the fire was making a right merry accompaniment to the conversation.

"Thinkest it to be wise for thee to give thyself so much to worldly reading?" he observed with a degree of diffidence. For his speech with this woman was on a somewhat different footing from that with other women of his parish. There was a sense in which it might be said of Master Johnes that he was afraid of the sharp-tongued, keen-witted widow. Although counted a brave man, and one that spake with great frankness of mind, yet he always felt constrained to temper his conversation with Widow Hardy, so that its prevailing tone was that of gentle insinuation or suggestion rather than of downright assertion or dogmatic statement. For she had a bright, cunning way of tripping him, so that he was

thrown into embarrassing yet laughable confusion. And such result was not in keeping with his ministerial dignity.

He ventured this remark for the reason that she spent large portions of time in the reading of the plays written by Will Shakespeare. Master Johnes himself was conversant with this author. In the early days of school life he had been taken to the theatre in London, and there had heartily enjoyed the revelations of this genius. But when his university training turned his mind in other directions he had eschewed the theatre and arrested his growing fondness for its literature. Yet he had not felt it to be inconsistent with his holy office to cultivate a fair degree of familiarity with this profane writer, and drink more or less copious draughts of inspiration from his pages. The Widow was conversant with this fact. It had been a pleasant bond between them for many years. Although her knowledge of Shakespeare had always derogated from her standing in the community, and had not been tolerated with any degree of grace except that her pastor had spoken in her favor, she had a way of making conversation spicy with apt quotations. But her neighbors did not like this particular kind of spice. It savored too much of sin and frivolity. It was altogether too strong for their stomach.

But with Master Johnes she gave herself large liberty in this respect, so that it often appeared

to him that she must spend a great portion of her time in the study of this playwright. Had her familiarity with the Bible kept pace with her Shakespearian readings, the shepherd of her soul would have been gratified and hopeful. Alas! she never manifested any interest in Holy Writ, unless it was to question some statement or controvert some doctrine. So the mind of Master Johnes was burdened with anxiety.

"Do you not remember how Governor Hopkins' wife came to a sad end?"

"I prithee, Master Johnes, was it not on the principle that much learning doth make thee mad?"

"Yea, it was truly her absorption in the things which her mind was not able to bear. She had good natural parts, and certain special gifts. But as her good husband said, she fell into sad infirmity and the loss of reason by occasion of giving herself wholly to reading and writing."

"She must have been weak in her intellects," replied the Widow Hardy. "'Tis the mind that makes the body rich."

"I doubt it not, I doubt it not," said the minister. "But does not Paul say that the woman is the weaker vessel, and that the husband is the head of the wife?" Now this was one of the cases where the exception proves the rule, if there be any truth in that questionable statement. For Goodman Hardy had been the head

of his wife only in name. So that such quotation simply amused her.

"'O most delicate fiend!
Who is't can read a woman?'

Shakespeare knew women far better than any Apostle Paul," continued Goody Hardy. "But truly, kind sir, I know my faults and iniquities. And I will say it unto you, as my father confessor, that my mind is often in great straits. Do you not observe that my neighbors look askance at me? What have I done that they avoid me as though I carried the plague? A plague upon them! They hate me, and their hatred fires the evil within my soul. Heaven only knows what will be the end of it all; but if you can say aught or do aught to help me, I shall be forever grateful."

The tears filled her eyes. It was an appeal truly pathetic. And what tender-hearted man could resist it? Such words of comfort as suggested themselves were spoken on the occasion. Then Ananias and Sapphira made their appearance, and Master Johnes improved the opportunity to question them upon the essentials of Christian doctrine and Biblical knowledge. Their answers were surprisingly clear and correct. Their behavior was faultless.

Had the minister withdrawn at this point he would have been edified with the general results of his visit. But the customary Bible

reading, exposition of Scripture, and long prayer followed. And it was during the latter exercise that disaster came, so that the edifice of the afternoon's propriety, so well constructed, was demolished and became a grotesque ruin. All the company knelt in prayer. The exercise had continued for that period which it seemed possible for the children to respect. Then they grew restless, and peeped through their fingers to observe the condition of things. Sapphira stealthily crept to the back of her mother's chair, against the open work of which her mother's face was pressed. She whisked a little straw from her pocket, and then deftly introduced it into the exposed nostril of her parent. The sensations were similar to those produced by the adventures of a lively fly in midsummer — such a tickling that one involuntarily sniffed, shook the head, and raised the hand to administer a rebuke to the daring insect.

Ere Goody Hardy had gone through these various acts and opened her eyes to discover the cause of such sensations, Sapphira was once more kneeling before her chair, peering cautiously forth to observe the results of her small diversion. Ananias had watched the whole performance with infinite appreciation. His sides shook with laughter. He held to his chair with vice-like grip, lest, in his paroxysms of merriment, he might roll upon the floor.

As the prayer continued the boy felt that Sapphira had virtually challenged him to some corresponding feat. He suddenly espied the big black cat serenely stretched upon the top of a dresser or set of shelves placed in front of the spot where Master Johnes was kneeling. It took but a moment for the boy to fasten a string to the tail of the animal and give it such a sudden pull that sleep was not only disturbed, but the shelves and all their contents. For the piece of furniture had been loosely set upon the top of an old chest of drawers. The shelves were filled with shining pewter plates, mugs, spoons, and other metal furnishings for the table. When tabby felt the harsh and unexpected grip of her tail she sprang in among the pewterware, the string became involved in the disorder, and the poor animal gave way to fright. Then black cat, wooden shelves, and pewter equipment all tumbled forward in sad confusion and distributed themselves upon the head and back of the parson, engaged in devotional exercises.

The disturbance aroused the fretted mother, who lifted her head and comprehended the situation on the instant. For Ananias sprang to his feet and started for the door, but his mother was too quick for him. Moved by that fiery and impulsive disposition which often brought her into trouble or disgrace, she snatched the boy by the arm, forced him across her knees, and, quite oblivious to the continued supplications of

her pastor, gave Ananias a good old-fashioned thrashing.

Now one would naturally suppose that such activity on the part of the family which the minister was seeking to help through devotional exercises would have embarrassed the parson so that he would have brought his prayer to a hasty, if not ignominious conclusion. And Master Johnes became conscious of such interruption that he felt it wise to hasten to the end. But a pastoral supplication at the throne of grace on such occasions was an important and impressive thing. It could not be easily condensed or curtailed. Nevertheless, the minister decided to omit certain petitions and simply conclude with the usual elaborate phrases; but even such conclusion took time. One could not break off and feel that the work or exercise was finished any more than one can stop knitting a stocking at any stage of the process and say that the task is done. The stocking must be narrowed and brought to a conventional form, and then a toe put upon it, and then a certain final touch given. The parson felt the difficulties of his office, and tried to adjust himself to the conditions as best he might. It required time for this adjustment. So that when the last words had been uttered on his part, amid the resounding whacks of Widow Hardy's strong hand, and the suppressed yet vigorous cries of the boy, and the convulsive snickerings of Sapphira,—when these last words

had been uttered, the ordeal of punishment was ended, mother, son, and daughter were once more upon their knees, and with the "amen" the four people in the room arose simultaneously and faced each other with diverse and conflicting emotions.

Master Johnes had been schooled into self-control. These old Puritans had the stoicism of manner which characterized the typical Indian. He regarded the individuals before him with commendable charity and indulgence. Whatever feeling of affronted dignity or shocked decorum he might harbor, there was never a manifestation of it in speech or manner. Goody Hardy was like a volcano which rests from its wrath for a moment in preparation for a wilder and more awful breaking forth. Her restrained passion was simply gathering force, and it would take only a moment or two for it to surge uncurbed and violent against the unhappy objects of it.

Master Johnes would have withdrawn at this point had it been possible, but she held him with the dread fascination of her eye. He had a feeling also that it might be expedient for him to remain and calm the troubled sea of family relations. There was a duty toward the children, difficult as it might be to discharge it, which he was not the man to evade.

Ananias, the chief sinner in this catastrophe, was in a state of semi-collapse. This was the

effect always produced upon him by the administering of corporal punishment at the hands of his mother. It was not only that his flesh stung with innumerable pestiferous sensations, but it was likewise that his "feelings" were seriously harassed and agitated. He was constrained to think that he had grown to be too large a boy for this sort of discipline. Pride suggested that spanking was childish and feminine in its character, although there was a sad lack of both features in the particular application of this form of punishment as administered by his mother. Nevertheless, he would have forgiven the deed had it not been that Master Johnes was the unwilling observer of it. To be sure, the minister was engaged in prayer, and had not seen the rapid sweep and vigorous application of that familiar arm. Yet Ananias was persuaded that Master Johnes was conscious of the whole brief, energetic performance, and it made him sick at heart.

Sapphira was amused. It interested her to watch the minister in his masterful self-control. There was a certain gracious manliness revealed under these trying circumstances which commanded her admiration. She was thinking how she would have acted had cat and shelves and pewter dishes come pelting her while praying. Then she recalled the time when Ananias pinched her as she knelt at her mother's knee, and how she sprang to her feet, turned upon him with the

fury of a wildcat, and hit him a cruel blow in the face; then returned as quickly to her devotions, and finished her prayer in proper form. The minister had set her good example. Again she gazed upon the play of passion in her mother's face, and it afforded her fresh entertainment. For the first episode of the straw had not yet been divulged to the mother, so that Sapphira was free to enjoy all that was mirth-provoking in the present situation.

Mrs. Hardy was the first to speak.

"Why do you come here to pray for me and look upon my wretchedness? Am I not a sufficient reproach without the necessity of further annoyance?"

Now Widow Hardy not only held the minister in great esteem, but she sought to make him her most welcome guest. It was not the real self which addressed him in these impulsive words.

"You well know that I am a lost soul. There is no hope for me or mine. Did I believe there was a good God in heaven I would pray to Him. But I hate your Puritan God. There is no God. Alas, that I was ever born to say it!"

The flood of her passion was just breaking into speech, and its riotous overflow brooked no interruption.

"I am an outcast," she continued. "My children are ostracised by the whole Puritan brood of the town. Your own John and Esther are kept away from them. But what right have I to com-

plain? They are bound to be my disgrace and destruction. O heavens! that I might end the uneven conflict, and go out in the darkness of oblivion!" The woman wept convulsively, and flung herself with utter abandon upon the wooden settle.

What words of comfort or instruction could this unwilling observer of her trials give her? An undertone of indescribable doubt or tragic despair played beneath her sorrowful outbreak. The storm was just begun. It would not end until it had exhausted itself. The tears were hysterical. They did not give relief or mitigate the force of her madness.

She sprang from her chair and seized hold of Sapphira. The child was looking upon her mother with a sort of mocking expression in her eyes, something of wonder and merriment discernible, her whole manner suggestively impish and irritating.

The woman shook her with such force that it seemed the child's very garments would drop from her person.

"You little devil, how dare you mock me in my shame!" exclaimed the mother. "Are you in league with the Evil One to blast every hope of my life? Go away from me!" And suiting her action to her words she thrust Sapphira from her door, and turned again to the minister, wringing her hands and moaning with anguish.

"Anne Hardy, you do yourself and your chil-

dren harm by yielding to such passion. Pray be calm, and think with reason upon these things."

"I have no reason! I am bereft of reason! I cannot think! I do not want to think! Leave me to my sin and damnation! Do not your people say that I belong to the Black Man? Methinks they speak the truth. But I will make them repent of it!"

"Poor soul," interrupted the minister, "you are unjust to yourself. Do not give way to such self-condemnation. I fear me that your health is breaking. You must not brood upon these things."

"Sir," continued the woman, "if there be such a thing as reprobation, I am one of the damned. Your Puritan God has predestinated me to everlasting torture. And it can be no worse than the present sufferings in the flesh. Death will prove a welcome release. Oh, that it might come to-day!" Her voice had risen to a shrill harsh cry. The woman was beside herself. All the tragedy of life was compressed into the pitiful and discordant notes. Ananias had slipped away in search of Sapphira. The minister was alone with this unbalanced mind.

"Where are my children?" she exclaimed, as their absence was first noted. There came another swift, inexplicable transition such as we sometimes remark with amazement in ourselves. And the boy entered with his sister held firmly by the hand. At sight of them all the ma-

ternal instincts swelled into bud and blossom. She clasped the children to her breast, and clung to them as a drowning man clings to a straw. With sweet tenderness she lavished kisses upon them, and sought to win from them some precious response to her endearments. But they were cold and distant; their hearts were chill within them.

It was while Anne Hardy was engaged in these earnest attempts to gain some expression of affection on the part of her children that Master Johnes quietly passed out of the door and left the trio to themselves. For the force of passion had so far spent itself, and the current of thought was now turned in such direction, that he felt it opportune for his retirement from the scene.

He was plunged into deep study by the events which he had just witnessed. This woman was an old friend. She was the daughter of a gentleman. In the mother country she had been widely courted, and by many men she had been considered a lady of brilliant qualities and prospects. As a member of his first parish, as a young woman to whom he was appointed spiritual adviser when fresh from Cambridge, he had found her singularly attractive. Many were the agreeable hours which he had passed in her company when they were young and the world was their field. Then came the days of hot polemics and ecclesiastical embroilments, the days of persecution for conscience' sake, the days of sor-

rowful dispersion. The years had passed ere their paths crossed again. Once more she was counted among his people, and the care of her soul was committed to his charge.

It was a thankless, puzzling, and distressful task. The woman was a bundle of contradictions. She came to the new settlement a restless and unhappy wife. She tarried among the people, a veritable thorn in the flesh. For she made no friends. And she set women against her. There were certain gifts which rendered her an acceptable helper in cases of sickness. Her touch was reputed to possess magical virtue. By certain passes of the hand she had thrown people into deep sleep. A peculiar charm seemed to emanate from her eyes. There was a magnetism or a repulsion in her presence which had been frequently noted. In cases of dire necessity her neighbors summoned her to minister to their sick. She knew the secrets of many herbs, and gathered large quantities of them for medicinal purposes. The teas which she made and prescribed were often efficacious. Her observations in respect to care, treatment, exercise were wise. But there was a something in the character of the woman which excited common antipathy. She came into intimate relations with no individual. Yet she was very free to speak her mind on all occasions. She was perfectly fearless and independent. Many of her

sharp and rasping observations were freely circulated in town.

Life for Widow Hardy had been a shipwreck. The reason for her emigration was closely locked within her breast. The dead husband never suspected it. For it was through her influences that the family came to Paradise.

In the first years of Master Johnes' ministry, when he was rector of the parish church in England, this woman had learned to love him! She had practised upon him all the arts which she had at her command. But the object of this love bewitchment remained invulnerable to her charms. When he became involved in the persecutions against non-conformity and hastily crossed the sea it was her purpose to seek him. But the times were troublous, and she was not able to shape affairr just to her mind. Ere the way opened for her emigration news reached her that Master Johnes had found him a wife in the New World. Then the disappointed woman journeyed to Holland with friends. Here she tarried until she was able to link her fate with a man who pledged her that he would make a new home for her in such colony of New England as she chose. On her part it was a pursuit of Master Johnes. Just what advantage or satisfaction she anticipated in this propinquity to the object of her secret devotion it was impossible to imagine. One must not impute base or criminal designs. For she was a person that

was accustomed to pay strict regard to the proprieties of life.

When she settled in Paradise, and lived years among the people, no word of accusation was brought against her other than that she was a woman of high temper and sharp tongue. Her general conduct was without reproach. Had it been otherwise, the authorities would have compelled her to leave the town. And she had become so useful in cases of sickness that many neighbors held her in genuine esteem. The death of her husband had given people an opportunity to show their friendliness. As the years passed it would have been natural that good feeling should deepen and strengthen. But the reverse was true. Neighbors grew distrustful of the woman. The minister's wife developed a startling and inexplicable repugnance. Doubtless that subtle instinct which is so keen and swift in the feminine nature, and which is always leaping to conclusions and inspiring its possessors with all sorts of prejudices, antipathies, suspicions, and hatreds, had taught Mrs. Johnes that she faced her mortal enemy. For such was Anne Hardy. Discreet and reserved in respect to this supreme secret of her life, it yet revealed itself to the one woman most vitally concerned. But Mrs. Johnes kept her secret likewise, so that it was never suspected by her husband. And furthermore, she guarded him from the influences of Anne Hardy as only a faithful and affectionate wife has the wit to do.

It was after the death of his true, wise guardian that the minister awakened to some vague suspicion in respect to the sentiments which Goody Hardy bore toward him. It is possible that he would have continued in ignorance had it not been that her attentions became more pronounced and unmistakable. For the neighbors were quick to observe that which was dim to his eyes. And the women of his parish, with that great good-will and loyal interest which is an unvarying feature of their devotion to a pastor, forthwith instructed him and volunteered such counsel as put him into a mood of real alarm. He had a genuine desire to befriend the woman. He had compassion on her. And the burden of her children was great. He took an interest in them such as every true pastor takes in the lambs of the flock. But he did not find it an easy matter to give her advice or influence her untamed offspring.

When he visited Widow Hardy she was vivacious, sympathetic, suggestive, agreeable in spirit and conversation, unless the occasion was one of serious import, like the misbehavior of Sapphira in church or the truancy of Ananias among the Indians. But when Master Johnes came to her house for the purpose of talking with her upon the subject of her soul's salvation she had a deft way of turning the conversation into other channels, inventing all sorts of interruptions, recalling the old days in England, and thus evading the

prime concern. It was only when some incident or experience pressed heavily upon her mind that she consented to speak in a frank, sober way. And when these moments came it was generally the case that vexation, fretfulness, anger, gained the mastery, so that her speech was not tempered with discretion or sobriety.

As Master Johnes walked thoughtfully away from the scene just witnessed, his face assumed an unwonted expression of sorrow and discouragement. Was the woman bereft of reason? Thankful was he that no villager other than himself had been a spectator of this stormful episode. The woman was a deeper mystery than the sisters of her sex. And his relations with all womankind had made him feel his ignorance and helplessness. His own wife had passed into the Unseen, bearing with her burdens which he had never been permitted as her partner to share. It occurred to him that it was her insight into the character of this woman and her suspicions of Anne Hardy's feelings that explained the aversion which his wife long manifested. Yet he did not like to think that this woman had crossed the sea that she might put herself once more within the range of his life, and share to a degree such honorable intimacy as was permitted between a pastor and his parishioner.

Revolving the events of the past in his mind, questioning many trivial actions, weighing such

evidences as suggested themselves, he reached the conclusion that his relations with Widow Hardy must adjust themselves precisely to the order marked for him by Mrs. Ludlow and the other faithful overseers of the parson. This was one of the cases where a minister became actually grateful for the interference of his womankind in personal matters. He betook himself to prayer with a genuine and comfortable sense of relief. He longed to do that which was right. But it required infinite wisdom to decide the matter. He must give all help within his power to this stricken, tempestuous nature. At the same time he must guard himself from scandal and protect the woman from herself.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will bring it to pass," said Master Johnes unto himself over and over again as he returned home and repaired to his study. The wilful fire upon his hearth had truly been a means of grace to him; but he now had a matter with which to deal that required other kind of treatment. Would it likewise be a means of grace, and did he possess the wisdom and power to conduct himself in accordance with the mind of his Master? He confessed fear and weakness. All the more necessity for him to get down upon his knees and tarry long at the throne of grace.

VII.

Behold, Thou art Fair, my Love; Behold, Thou art Fair!

These old Puritans were ardent lovers. The flame of passion, pure and exalted, was a vital fire in the soul of John Winthrop and Margaret Tyndal. The story of their love is very sweet and beautiful. Master Johnes had been just as warm and manful a lover once upon a time. But that was a secret kept sacredly in the treasure-house of memory.

When the young minister came to the New World he came without a helpmeet. This was a condition universally acknowledged to be unfortunate. The lot of a bachelor in early New England was thorny and grievous. There were towns that imposed special taxes upon them. Every inducement to marriage was offered.

The days of boarding-houses had not come. Bachelors must shift for themselves. A wife was therefore a prime necessity. And when death parted husband and wife, the unhappy companion that tarried on earth was encouraged to make immediate selection of an earthly com-

forter, so that little time might be lost in respect of conjugal fellowship and felicity.

Master Johnes had visited Governor Winthrop on his arrival in New England. The Governor's wife, good soul, yearned over the lonely emigrant. Must he go into the wilderness without the sweet consolations of a home-maker? Not if Providence favored her plans. So Margaret Winthrop found a lovely bride for the minister. The brief courtship ended, the happy pair took the Hartford trail, spent a few days of honeymoon with Thomas Hooker in Hartford, and then followed the 'cross-country trail to Paradise.

Master Johnes had his own treasured secret. The romance of his life was a bright summer's day of strong, true love in the mother country. She was a lily-fair maiden, the soul of grace and purity, sweet and joyous as one of the forest songsters. And one morning her father, a King Charles courtier, had said "nay" to these devoted lovers. And on one other morning this father had taken his beautiful child and disappeared in behalf of the King. A curt note informed the parson wooer of this maiden that she had been affianced to a gentleman near the throne, and that her marriage was arranged to antedate her departure for some foreign land. So Master Johnes was left desolate. He then turned non-conformist, and later voyaged to the western wilderness.

When Mrs. Margaret Winthrop chose a wife

for him he submitted with that grace characteristic of the man. The curtain had fallen upon his brief and blessed play of holy passion. It was impossible for it to rise again. So he was joined in wedlock with one who proved a faithful, devoted helpmeet,—one who doubtless likewise hid away her own bright romance and walked loyally in the beaten path of duty.

When the days of bereavement came to Master Johnes his mind reverted to the early passionate love. His sincere attachment to his wife was quite compatible with his first love. For he had virtually buried that fair and royal maiden, to whom his heart had been long ago consecrated. And now there dawned for him a sort of resurrection day. He was living over again the swift, glad hours of morning love. He was reviving the covered memories of old, sweet days. He cheered himself with the thought that his idol might live for him. Was it true that she had been wed to another man? He had never doubted it until to-day. Might not the father have sought to deceive him? Could he think that she would forget him and pass voluntarily into some other realm of wife service? So he was disquieted at the same time that he was solaced by his day dreams.

The breaking up of spring comes suddenly upon these southern New England shores. It was April when the sun flung its hot rays against the snows and scattered every vestige of the win-

ter's storms. Then the warm winds dried the well-watered fields and the rough paths that stretched through the town into the woods. Once more there was easy communication with Stamford, New Haven, and the river settlements. And one day there came down from Boston, in company with other travellers, a new family destined for permanent residence in Paradise,—a gentleman of means, bringing a goodly amount of worldly gear, planning large things in agriculture and commerce. There was a wife and child. There was also a widow, his sister-in-law, and her daughter.

The interest in such an arrival was naturally keen. For new-comers were subjected to close scrutiny. The town had kept clear of much that was pernicious and disturbing through their rejection of various candidates for citizenship. A man of reputation and character, one who came with set purpose to get good and do good, was acceptable. But adventurers were warned off the soil. The town authorities refused to sell them lots or assign them lands. But word had come that these approaching emigrants deserved the favor and good-will of Paradisians. So people were prepared to welcome the newcomers.

The arrival was on Saturday afternoon, and Master Johnes was engaged upon his sermon. Roger Ludlow entertained the travellers. As it was Saturday evening ere they were refreshed,

neighbors did not call upon them. For Saturday night was kept with just as much strictness as Sunday. John Cotton had set this fashion, and his word was law in all things.

Master Johnes had been lonely during the past week. As he ploughed his land and prepared the soil for his first plantings he kept thinking of the spring days for him in old England,—the days of hope, ambition, happiness. He was now close upon the noon of life. The best of things were yet to be plucked, according to natural expectation. Dwelling upon the past, and linking it with the future, he was all prepared for that which greeted him on Sunday morning when he looked down from his pulpit and saw new faces in the little congregation. On the right were the men, placed by the vote of the town in accordance with their station and importance. Roger Ludlow was in front with the officers of the church and the magistrates. A stranger sat by his side, and his face was unfamiliar. On the left of the minister were the women, likewise classified and arranged. By the side of Mrs. Ludlow was a face framed in the weeds of widowhood,—a face inexpressibly sweet and gracious, a sad, pathetic light raying forth from deep, calm eyes; a face in whose fine strong lines were revealed a gentleness of nature, a sincerity of heart, an affluence of spiritual life most rare and beautiful. It was the highest type of womanhood that was represented by that face. The

stranger was one who made unconsciously a marked impression upon every person within the radius of her influence. Just as sunshine diffuses its subtle force through intangible and unseen agencies, making its presence felt by means mysterious and inexplicable to us, so this new presence, this rare personality, pervaded the atmosphere of the place and quietly enforced a merited recognition.

Master Johnes felt drawn toward the stranger ere he had gazed into the depths of those eyes and yielded to the charm of their tranquil loveliness. But it required only one swift glance to reveal unto him the spirit nearest kinned by fadeless affection unto his own. The years had brought their changes. There was a ripeness and effulgence to her beauty that were the products of time. Discipline had chiselled many delicate lines in the features. One might easily trace suffering, repression, sacrifice, submission, death itself in the well-defined and noble lineaments. For this woman had been virtually dead these many years,—dead to the world, dead to the peace and joy of love, dead to all hope that concerned the life that now is. And the story of desolation was distinctly told in the tracery of fine hieroglyphics, detected by keen and sympathetic eyes.

But that which startled the minister, as he looked down into that dear and long-lost face, was the swift upspringing of the old-time, deathless affection,—an affection which had been

solemnly pledged to him, an affection which he now knew to be still vital, unchanged, and affluent.

Our eyes are tell-tale helpers. They gossip in spite of much excellent training. The best school of manners fails them when it comes to a matter of wise reserve or kind concealment. And love, of all passions, is most subtle in its sweetly bewildering communications and confidences. So Master Johnes had compressed into the minute the surprise and gratitude, the assurance and ecstasy of such love as few men know—an experience richer far than all that the years had vouchsafed him. For that one moment he was oblivious to meeting-house and congregation. He saw just one face. He was conscious of a single presence. His whole nature did loyal and unstinted homage to the person of his beloved.

But such rapture is too subtle and intense for prolongation. One could hardly survive the continued strain. And Master Johnes was clad in gown and bands, prepared to lead the people of God in worship and instruct them in the Holy Scriptures.

It occurred to him on the instant that he might be guilty of sacrilege thus to bring his personal concernments of the heart into such close relations with the awful hour and sacred exercise of a public religious meeting. He was shocked at his own neglect of propriety and abuse of divine

privileges. For the instant he felt that he was altogether unfit to proceed with the order of worship. His sensitive conscience stung him to the quick because he had forgotten the responsibilities of the occasion and had yielded himself unto the joy of earthly love, albeit the love was as pure and true as heaven itself.

Like many another minister in the pulpit whose mind wanders, whose heart gets fixed on the things of earth, whose spirit is for the time trammelled by every-day life, necessity was upon him, and he must go on with his sacred task. Like many another minister, he would have given untold riches for the privilege of saying to his people, "I cannot pray or preach in this place to-day. I am not in mood or condition to help you. The Spirit has forsaken me. I must leave the pulpit and the meeting-house, and seek a message and a helper." Any such remark would have been equivalent to a confession of mental derangement. It would have been as much as one's ministerial standing was worth to venture upon such a course. The minister must be superior to moods. And is it not because we demand this superiority to feeling that there are times when the minister's work seems altogether devoid of genuine sentiment.

In his self-condemnation and abasement Master Johnes let fall the curtain upon the little drama of his love. And the reaction proved favorable to the zeal and fervor which soon manifested

themselves in worship. It was by a swift gathering of his forces and a massing of his strength upon the exercises of the hour that he rose above these sweet distractions and sad humiliations described.

The Song of Solomon was a favorite Scripture with the early Puritans. After a psalm had been lined out and sung to York, Master Johnes chose to expound the fourth chapter of this suggestive piece of love literature. For while he had regained his mental and spiritual balance, he was forced by irresistible compulsion to revert to the subject closest to his heart. And there had come to him a real quickening of life,—the inspiration to turn this hour unto good account in his ministry to his people. A transition of this sort is not an uncommon experience with preachers. In the case of Master Johnes it was a strict adherence to one rule of his life,—namely, the improvement of every Providence by way of spiritual application and incentive. So the service, which seemed on the start to forecast disaster for the minister, assumed a phase of unwonted interest and power as the man proceeded.

"Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair!" He pictured the charm and grace which sometimes incarnate themselves in the person of a beautiful woman. It was a fine piece of word-painting, for this parson had a poetic temperament, and on occasion he permitted it to contribute to his work. Hebrew

imagery is rich and glowing. His colors were drawn from the storehouse of Biblical incident and simile. Then he took his fair, vivid, soulful picture and made it speak for the church of Christ, the bride of our Lord. And there were hearers present whose imagination was fired and whose heart was made to throb as never before in his ministry. And when the good man led his people in prayer for the accustomed forty minutes, the prayer itself was tropical and impassioned beyond recollection. His wealth of noble and uplifting phrases passed all measure. The stateliness and movement of the prayer were instinct with fine, devout emotion.

The sermon was upon the divine decrees. It was an admirable piece of logic. But it would have contrasted unfavorably with the preceding prayer and exposition had it not been that the conclusion advanced to higher levels of doctrinal statement, and dwelt with deep feeling and graphic phrase upon the love of God, His abounding mercy seen in singular and blessed Providences, and that undying and ever-increasing felicity granted to the elect,—which felicity was in rare cases bestowed to a degree upon poor sinful men while on earth, through some brief season, as a sweet foretaste of the life which was to unfold in heaven.

It was a memorable service, take it all in all. The concluding prayer was very tender and cheering. People felt that they had spent two

hours and forty minutes in a delightfully profitable way. As was their custom, they withdrew from meeting with quietness and decorum. The near-by neighbors walked thoughtfully to their homes. The more distant worshippers passed over into their Sabbath-day houses on the right of the Green, where they enjoyed the simple lunch, and discussed the sermon and the latest news.

Master Johnes descended from his high, rude pulpit and looked his greeting into the expectant eyes of the stranger. Did any observer think that this man and this woman had ever known one another? They were most exemplary in their deportment. Never a formal sign of recognition. The lady (for the sign-manual of gentle birth was upon her) departed with her host and hostess. The minister assumed his usual dignified pace and bearing, and passed solemnly to the parsonage. But it was a red-letter day in the history of their love. And the joy of it was too large and precious for the world to share.

VIII

They Put Together the Fragments of a Love Story

But the meeting-house contained one vigilant, keen-sighted onlooker. Nothing seemed to escape the watchfulness of Widow Hardy. She saw the latest emigrant when she entered in the company of Mrs. Ludlow. She saw the minister when he first gazed into the woman's eyes. She saw the color come into her cheeks, and that slightest eddy of emotion which rose to the surface and then sank quickly to depths beneath. She saw the sudden play of holy passion upon the frank countenance of Master Johnes. She felt his confused absorption in the presence of this stranger. She disentangled his various emotions and measured the force of his wellnigh concealed agitation. When Master Johnes led the people in psalm, prayer, exposition, sermon, she followed every variation of feeling and interpreted every change of mood. And when she returned to her house it was with soul on fire.

For long years had Anne Hardy secretly cherished an unrequited love. But circumstances had

taken such shape within the later months that she had dared to hope. She was conscious on many an occasion that her most active enemy in this one great pursuit was her very self. For her temper was uncontrollable. She fell into strange moods. Any personal attractions were offset by the wild spirit within which impelled her to say and do things hateful to herself and harmful to those about her. Nevertheless, she had recently cherished a hope. And, moved by such thoughts and aspirations, she had secretly read such books as friends in England had been able to send her,—books that treated of magic, love-potions, the black art, manifold philtres, and kindred themes. This literature was securely locked within an old chest which hid away her treasures. It was an extensive and a fascinating literature. Night after night, when the children had been put to bed and had fallen asleep, she pored over the contents of these mysterious books. But not always unobserved. For the children on more than one occasion had wakened, crept slily to the door, and watched the absorbed woman turn the pages of some black book which suggested to their minds the dark secrets of witchcraft.

They had likewise observed that she slipped forth into the darkness of the night when the winds were wild, and that she had left them for hours at a time when these strange spells came over her. On the mornings following her secret

wanderings the children watched her with a sort of nameless fear, manifesting a most obedient spirit when she bade them do this or that task, seeking in every possible way to obtain her favor. But there came into her eyes a far-away look. She semed to live in another realm. And these two children questioned the conduct of their mother. Such was the condition of life in the Hardy family when the unknown lady came from England.

Sunday evening was the time when neighbors spent a social hour with their friends. The sun had set and supper had been eaten when Master Johnes walked up the street and knocked at the door of Roger Ludlow. He had preferred to meet his friend in some quiet place where they might hold sweet converse and feel unrestrained by observers. But it was foreordained that the first words spoken to each other by these friends should be commonplace and conventional. The Governor had simply been informed that they had met long years ago in the mother country ere they were married. So he pointed to the lady as the minister gave his stately greetings to the company, and remarked:

"I learn that you are friends. As you renew pleasant relations, may they bring you good-cheer."

Then Master Johnes bowed with fine courtesy to the Lady Stanley, and advanced to the place where she stood and touched her outstretched hand.

"We welcome you to Paradise. May it prove a very land of Canaan into which you have entered."

"I thank you for these kind words of greeting. Methinks we shall be compelled to look within the soul in order to find any Canaan of rest and peace for this life. But this New World mayhap shall afford us as fine privileges in the way of tranquillity as any Old-World refuge."

Meanwhile the company had taken seats and were engaged in general conversation, so that no special notice was paid to Master Johnes and the new-comer. They continued their quiet and matter-of-fact inquiries and relations, or joined in the common speech of the hour. And then they bade each other good-night with the beautiful courtesy in which they had been instructed when young people together in old England.

What deep, strong undercurrents of life often flow along unobserved by those that are nigh us! The unwritten history of the soul is that which reveals the real man. But it is read only by the elect and favored minority.

As Master Johnes returned to his parsonage that night the loneliness and sorrow of the months had all dispersed. He knew not yet the story of these years of separation. But he believed that the Lord had heard his prayers, and that his true love was returned to him for his happiness and good service. It might not be that she would consider old pledges as binding. She

might refuse to unite her destiny with his in the close tie of marriage. Yet the fact was incontrovertible that she was now a part of his life, placed in his spiritual charge, subject to his personal influences. There was to be for him the support and inspiration of her presence. Whatever turn events might take, he felt in very truth that life was to assume a grander meaning, and that days of nobler service and larger enjoyment were before him.

On Monday morning there was farm-work to do, and the parson bent to his task with the faithfulness of the most enthusiastic agriculturist, thereby setting excellent example to his people. When evening came the wearied man was glad to lie down to rest like any honest day-laborer. On the second day similar demands were made upon him, and he continued to serve with John and the help. But Wednesday was lecture day. So he prepared for the service, and when it was over took occasion to walk with the Lady Stanley to the home of Roger Ludlow. And here they were providentially granted the privilege of a quiet interview.

Master Johnes first told his story, replying to questions which were put to him by way of illuminating the narrative, and throwing not a little spirit into the record of his struggles, persecutions, journeyings, and settlement. His would have been a very brief recital had not his auditor insisted upon the details of many actions and

events. And he was made to forget his own desire and anxiety to hear her story through that peculiar interest which she was able to excite in himself by means of her kindling sympathies and subtle encouragements. There was real eloquence manifest in his speech as he dwelt upon the conflict between love of comfort and culture in England, and voice of conscience, sense of duty pointing unto New England. But it moved his single hearer to her inmost soul when he told of the break made in life by her own sudden disappearance, and the utter hopelessness of heart with which at length he bade farewell to the mother land. It was not that he yielded life or longed for release and oblivion. It was simply that a part of life, and the best part of life, was taken from him, so that he was left maimed and stricken beyond remedy. He purposed to throw himself into all the work, sacrifice, enterprise of the New World without reservation. He did not propose to belittle his mission by any vain regrets or idle memories. He gave himself to his ministry. But the fact was unchanged that he had never been his real best self since the days of plighted troth.

He was frank to say that marriage was the condition of life under which society demanded that his work should be done. And he had married because the emigrants had emphasized the necessity, and urged him to unite himself with an acceptable companion. This was not altogether the

noblest way of looking upon the subject, but it was an honest, manly explanation, and it harmonized with the spirit of Puritan custom in New England. The years of ministry in Paradise were painted with brightest colors. Just enough of the poetic temperament was blended into the nature of Master Johnes to enable him thus to idealize his life and throw over it the genial glow of a cheerful imagination. He did not spare rich coloring as he delineated the various experiences of wilderness life, giving a quaint and captivating forth-setting to Indian warfare, pioneer activity, fraternal intercourse with neighbor settlements, occasional interchange of courtesies with New Amsterdam, and the relation of Old-World and New-World activity.

But the narrative was ended with the down-going of the sun, and Master Johnes was compelled to adjourn the other part of the interview to a later day.

It was a week ere the opportunity came. Then the Lady Stanley recited her story. One may tell in simple language experiences which have absorbed the heart's blood. Words seem often like the most unsympathetic medium for the transmission of that which is supremely important to the individual. And yet how the person chiefly concerned will take language and use it with such skill and infuse into it such spirit that it becomes vital with the narrator's personality!

It was a sad and tragic tale which the Lady

Stanley told. She simply sketched the principal events of the few years, and hastened through the narration with nervous impetuosity.

It was when the course of true love seemed to run smoothly, and Rector Johnes was her accepted suitor, that her father bade her prepare for a swift journey, as he had great plans for her. It was while these preparations were making that she learned he designed her marriage with a prominent nobleman. There was no time to protest or notify her lover, or make other arrangements. Haste marked every movement. She was taken to London; the gentleman for whom she was destined presented himself; the wedding day was appointed, and, without consulting her wishes and in face of her wildest opposition, she was married to this man, who was high in authority and a favorite of the King. The mental strain which followed, the horror of darkness which fell upon her, the bitterness and anguish of soul, pass description. She was taken abroad by her husband on a mission of importance, visiting successively various courts, made to take her conspicuous part in numerous royal functions, held in virtual imprisonment during all this period, and then brought back to England and placed within the court circle of Charles I. But it was a life repugnant to her tastes.

She had followed the fortunes of her lost friend and lover so far as she had been able to trace him. In her interest and fidelity she had become

a Puritan, so that there were special reasons why her life became hard at this period. As there had never been any affection between herself and her husband, it could hardly be said that any estrangement ensued; and yet there was a sense in which they now became estranged. For she refused on various occasions to do his bidding, and was therefore subjected to most cruel treatment. Had it not been that a son and heir was born at this period, there had come release from her bondage. But this event gave her a certain importance in the eyes of her husband, and she continued to serve the man to whom she was bound.

It was a harsh and bitter servitude, and she was forced to submit for the sake of the children which came to her through these years. There were three of them—two boys and a girl. Life was a mockery when it was not a thraldom to her. Great issues were at stake, and for the sake of family she was made to assume a rôle which she hated. But circumstances are often too heavy for individual resistance. Men and women learn to submit for the hour, biding the time of change and freedom, seeking with all faith the event which means enfranchisement. So this sore-pressed and desolate woman continued to cherish a hope.

Then came the severest test of all. For royalty was attracted by her loveliness of feature and fascination of mind. Must she submit to this last and frightfullest of humiliations? Her husband was

sent abroad again on a mission to France and Holland. The unprotected woman was commanded to remain at court. Never was there a doubt in respect to the purity and nobility of her character. But it was a station of grave difficulties and unnamable embarrassments which she held. As she sought to thread her safe way through the wilderness of trials, infidelities, and corruptions which encompassed her, the burden of life was manyfold increased, and she felt how literally it was true that one could not tell what a day might bring forth. Her boys had been taken from her and put into the charge of tutors and governors. Her little girl was the only friend and companion of her perilous life.

Then came the news of her husband's death, and her escape from the hateful bond of her false marriage vows. The immediate result was unhappy, for it placed her in circumstances of increasing peril from the attentions of a certain royal personage. What had been the result of the strange, repulsive conditions which held her with vice-like grip it is impossible to say; but this was the day of the Revolution. The air was surcharged with the spirit of resistance. Things had been going from bad to worse in the kingdom. One day the nation awakened to the fact that Parliament was dictator of England, and Cromwell was dictator of Parliament. Then was this imperilled woman saved from her enemies.

She had been present at Ludlow Castle, and

heard the mask of Comus, written for a festival which the Earl of Bridgewater had arranged. She had met John Milton, the gifted author, and had enjoyed his noble words upon liberty,—words which were afterward to sound throughout the great English-speaking world and excite a responsive note in millions upon millions of hearts. And in her converse with the poet she had revealed something of her own freedom-aspiring nature. The friendship thus incidentally begun was the means of acquaintance with a goodly company of cultured Puritans. For it must be remembered that Puritanism is not synonymous with ignorance, illiteracy, rudeness, poverty, the lack of taste or distrust of gentlemanliness. Puritanism represented the finest, truest, richest life of the kingdom. It was a grand protest in behalf of righteousness and manhood. As such it must be identified with the best that is peculiar to the nature and constitution of man.

So when the monarchy was overthrown and the commonwealth was instituted, Lady Stanley (for now she had taken her husband's family name and dropped the lofty title which came to her by marriage) sought the help of her Puritan friends, and felt for the first time in her life that she was in some sense a free woman. Her father, with whom she had come into infrequent relations since her marriage, had escaped to the Continent, and was there devoting himself to the interests of the man who was to be known later as Charles II.

Her two boys had also been placed in his charge, and were now in France with him and members of her husband's family. The unrest of the times, the bitter feuds manifest among the people, the general condition of war, confiscation, treachery, disturbance made Lady Stanley feel that, involved as she was with Roundheads and Cavaliers, there could be no peace for her in England. She had renounced all claims to property coming to her from her late husband. She longed to find a spot where she might retire from the vain pageantry of courts and the uncertain agitation of revolutionary strife, and live a calm, active, independent, helpful life. And naturally her mind reverted to the New World, and to that special part of it where the one she long ago had loved was a citizen.

His marriage was known to her, but she had believed that it was her own enforced union with a courtier of the King, and not a change of affection, which explained it. Yet there was a natural delicacy on her part when she thought of entering once more into the circle of his friendship, and she wavered long months in coming to a decision. But during the winter there reached her the news that Master Johnes had been afflicted in the loss of his wife. On the instant a resolution was formed to migrate unto Paradise. Then came the second thought that it likewise might have an appearance of indelicacy on her part. Would it not seem that she was seeking him? and might it

not be that he had forgotten early days, and really solaced himself with some stronger, deeper affection? These and many similar thoughts passed through her mind. But she reasoned with herself that her secret would be well kept; that she would never betray her hope except that he demanded it. So the arrangements were quickly made; her husband's brother—a man of better character and nobler spirit than the one whose destiny had been linked so closely with her own—was prevailed upon to move with her into the wilderness. And Henry Stanley was the more easily persuaded to this course for the reason that he likewise was a Cavalier, a friend of the young Prince Charles, and circumstances were such that he felt he best could serve him by some temporary withdrawal from the mother country.

So this second son of an English nobleman, this Cavalier brother-in-law of a Puritan Lady, settled his family affairs with commendable expedition, bade his few remaining friends in England farewell, and sailed away with wife and child, sister-in-law and niece, for America. Henry Stanley had planned to conform to the new conditions of life in Paradise and make himself a respected and popular citizen so long as he remained in the uncongenial environment. The sojourn for him was to be simply temporary. For he was prepared to return unto his country on the instant that he might be of service to the rightful heir of the throne. But he did not intend to pose as a dis-

cordant element in the society of Paradise. He was minded to adapt himself to deprivation, hard work, and Puritan methods. As he brought with him two thousand pounds sterling, he was all the more welcome to the citizenship of his chosen settlement. Emigration had almost ceased now that the Puritans were holding the whip-hand in England. For this reason, also, he was made welcome, since the new-comers were comparatively few and far between.

The voyage across the sea had been an uneventful one. The travellers were given a cordial reception by Governor Bellingham when they arrived in Boston, but they did not tarry long in the Massachusetts colony. Joining the first company that followed the Hartford trail after their arrival, they hastened through the wilderness, embarrassed by the snow, ice, and flood, reaching the Connecticut River after a week of hardship unparalleled in their experience. The journey down to Paradise was varied by hot April days and cold, driving storms that tried their toughness of fibre almost beyond endurance. It was a glad hour for the weary travellers when they were comfortably housed in the home of Roger Ludlow.

Such was the meagre record of life narrated by the Lady Stanley, with certain omissions and variations suggested by the position in which she at length found herself.

The expressions of interest and sympathy on the part of her listener were genuine but re-

served, thoroughly in keeping with the characteristic self-restraint of the typical Puritan. And when the swift, modest narrative was concluded there were a few conventional phrases spoken between them, and again they separated.

Meanwhile Mr. Henry Stanley had purchased a home lot and other lands reaching back into the country. As the lot which came into his possession contained a good frame-house and outbuildings for the cattle, it was not long ere he was settled in his new home, and the family had become wonted to the strange conditions of pioneer life.

IX

Ananias and Sapphira Mix a Drink for the Minister

It seemed like a rude Paradise to which Lady Stanley had come, and yet the atmosphere of peace and righteousness pleased her. There had been not a few disturbances in Massachusetts Bay colony. They were stricter and more controversial around the neighborhood of "Lost-Town." (For this was the jestful way that many people of Paradise, Hartford, New Haven, and other settlements spake of the aspiring town in Eastern Massachusetts. Boston was "Lost-Town,"—a scattered, disjointed assemblage of houses and little stores, hidden in the fringe of the wilderness, and quite difficult to find). But here in Connecticut there was a large degree of liberty. And people had become so thoroughly intent upon the building up of a prosperous and well-conditioned colony that they exercised considerable toleration in religious notions and civic affairs.

It seemed like a rude Paradise, and yet it was a real Paradise to Lady Stanley. For there was freedom from the vanity and wickedness of the

English court. There was genuine sincerity and simplicity of life. There was the quiet and security for which she had longed since the days of childhood. There was abundance of the necessaries and fortunate dearth of nearly all luxuries. And the tone of life was pure, fine, true. To be sure, men and women were compelled to work. Tasks were given to every member of each household. Some of these services might seem to be drudgery, but that depended upon one's spirit. Had not George Herbert sung very sweetly and truly concerning the sacredness of honest, faithful labor?

The Lady Stanley had something of the feeling peculiar to a traveller picked from off a wreck to which he has been clinging and at last transported to a place of comfortable safety. For years she had been tossed up and down the sea of strife and sorrow, fearing the gloom of some blacker night, distrustful of each day's ending. Now she had come to tranquil haven. The life must be one of ideal quiet and liberty. What were Indians, isolation, poverty, narrowness, wilderness, and toil in comparison with the malefic influences and the sanguinary conflicts incident to life in the embroiled mother land!

It was during the early days of experience in Paradise that such thoughts cheered Lady Stanley. And it was likewise during these first days of her sojourn in town that certain local disturbances were noted.

The Stanley family had taken possession of their house and furnished it with such belongings as they brought with them. The needs of housekeeping in the New World were quite simple. And furniture itself was not elaborate. The domestic affairs of the new household were speedily adjusted, and it seemed to the Lady Stanley like the dawning of a fair, calm day.

It was just at twilight that she was seated before the large fireplace in the kitchen, resting from her labors, and thinking upon things associated with the hour. Suddenly there fell down the chimney and sprang into the room a great black cat. Her little daughter, sitting by her side, was terrified and flung herself into the mother's lap. The cat meanwhile had disappeared. It was perhaps a half hour later when strange noises were heard about the house. First it was a moan, then a shrill, subdued cry, then uncanny laughter. The strange noises were distinctly audible to all the members of the family. And it was a grievous annoyance to them.

On the following evening the large kettle hanging on the crane was turned upside down and the contents were spilled into the glowing coals. The same week their fowls, purchased with the home lot and land, began to sicken and die. A week later two bricks were thrown repeatedly against the side of the house; and when the family looked from the window they saw the bricks strike the clapboards, but no hand was seen

flinging the hard substances. They seemed to come from space.

These things were reported to Master Johnes. He wisely concluded to visit Ananias Hardy and question the boy upon the matter. There was a possibility that he was the author of these pranks, although it was hard to imagine why he should assail the Stanleys. If the annoyances could not be traced to the mischief-making Ananias they must assuredly be occurrences of greater concernment. Ere such a view was taken, however, any suspicions against Ananias must be cleared away.

It was a May afternoon when Parson Johnes visited the Hardy household. The mistress was gathering roots down in the swamp where the Pequots made their last stand against the English. But the two children were at home, and it was a favorable opportunity to question them.

When the greetings were spoken and the proper explanations made, Master Johnes hurried to the matter in hand.

"Ananias, I fear me that you lag upon the street until the hour is late and you should be at home."

"Master Johnes, we are made to go to bed with the chickens."

"Have you been to the house of Mr. Stanley any time the past two weeks?" asked the minister.

"I went there, sir, on Tuesday to ask him to give me work through the month. Mother says she can spare me."

"And he tried to kiss the little girl, sir!" exclaimed Sapphira. "I saw him. And she stamped her foot and looked like a wizard."

"Ananias, do you not know that it is very naughty to take such liberties? And have you not seen men in the stocks for such misdoing?"

"I'm sorry, sir, and I hate the girl, and I'll never speak to her again," said the easily-repentant youngster. "She's a stuck-up thing, and has the airs of a queen."

"Have you been there again, Ananias? Did you go to Mr. Stanley's Wednesday evening?" Then the boy hesitated and looked inquiringly at his sister, and at length replied:

"No, sir; I have stayed away, for Mr. Stanley did not want me."

"Ananias," said Sapphira, "you didn't come home till long after dark Wednesday night. What do you lie to the minister for? Don't you know he can see right through you, just like God?"

"But I wasn't at Mr. Stanley's. I was down to the Mill, and then I went to the beach. That was why I was late, and mother whipped me for it."

"Oh, Ananias, you need another trouncing, and mother'll give it to you when she gets home and finds that Master Johnes has questioned you and you have told stories! Ananias, don't you know the minister has charge of your soul?" Then this precocious child turned to the visitor and said with an air of infinite concern: "What is a

soul? How do you save it? Have you ever seen one, Master Johnes?" The minister felt that the tables were turned, and he was to be subject unto a catechetical exercise. And while he was thinking just how to answer the child, she gave her own definition:

"Why, a soul must be oneself—this something within that thinks and loves. I've seen souls. They fly through the air like angels. And I've heard them cry in the night. Or do you think it was the witches?"

"My child," said Master Johnes, "these things are beyond the ken of your years."

And the good man wanted to say that they were beyond the wit of his own mature mind. But it was not dignified to make confessions to a little child. So he told her to read her Bible, and listen to the preaching, and by-and-by she would understand more than she did now.

The discussion, however, branched off into a variety of Scriptural and religious conversation, the minister being really glad to talk freely with the children, and seeking with all pains and faithfulness to instruct them in the way of life. So that the prime object of his visit was well-nigh forgotten, and the information in respect to the whereabouts of Ananias on various recent occasions was exceedingly meagre and unsatisfactory.

The day was sharp and chill—one of those May days that nip the buds and dishearten

the farmer. And it was a day when a warm drink was especially agreeable and appropriate. The children had been taught to honor the minister with every attention. They proposed to him that he excuse them for a moment while they mixed a heating drink for him. This was the one universal mark of hospitality. It was a test of the minister's balance and sobriety when he made numerous pastoral calls and accepted the various expressions of good-will in the shape of hot and spicy concoctions.

Master Johnes took down a small edition of Shakespeare's plays that had been resting in a familiar place on a shelf against the wall,—a little volume that he had often had in hand and discussed with keen appreciation with Goody Hardy. He was soon absorbed in the love history of Romeo and Juliet.

Ananias and Sapphira were engaged in the manufacture of the beverage for the minister. They had seen their mother prepare it on several occasions, so that they were fairly conversant with the method of its admixture. The foundation of the drink was hard cider, made from the best apples grown in the young orchard. For they had not yet learned to make windfalls and decayed fruit serve this purpose. And the cider of the colony had become famous even before this date. Did not Williams write to Winthrop: "Your loving lines were as a cup of your Connecticut cider"?

The liquid was hard, strong, and transparent, like white wine. This article was sweetened to the taste. Then the bottle of spirits was brought into service. The children had seen their mother make use of it a great many times. It was kept in a cozy cupboard with other articles of a medicinal nature. After the spirits had been properly mixed an egg was beaten and shaken into the compound. And, finally, there was a grating of nutmeg and a hasty sifting of spice upon the foaming surface. Then the children tasted the beverage.

"It needs a little cider," said Ananias; "it is too sweet."

As they had discreetly mixed the drink in a large pewter tankard, it was possible to add to the quantity without an overflow. So a little more cider was poured into the dish. After it was well stirred, Sapphira tested it.

"Oh, Ananias, it is too sour. Master Johnes will not like it. He has a 'sweet tooth,' mother says."

So a fair quantity of sugar was added, and the tankard was once more thoroughly shaken. Then both children tasted it.

"I think there is too much spice in it," observed Ananias.

"I can taste the egg. It must need some more spirits," continued Sapphira.

As they both agreed that spirits would mitigate the faults which they had detected, the

spirits were poured into the tankard. There was a fresh stirring and shaking and tasting, another pinch of spice, some more cider added, so that the abundance of spirits might be properly disguised, and at last the carefully mixed concoction was ready for the hot iron. The children had attended to the heating of the iron ere they began the manufacture of their treat. So the red-hot metal was thrust into the fragrant ambrosia and permitted to sizzle for a moment, when it was withdrawn, and a steaming, frothy pewter cup of the stuff was deferentially offered to the minister. The hot iron not only warmed the beverage, but gave it an agreeable flavor of bitter, like a good tonic.

Master Johnes commended the children for their skill in preparing that which was esteemed a universal necessity. After sipping the cup to the last of its contents he bade them a kind good-day, and continued on the round of his pastoral labors.

At length it suddenly occurred to Ananias and Sapphira that they had been wasteful. The tankard was almost full of the punch which they had made. One cup had been used. What should be done with the remainder? For Anne Hardy was both poor and economical. Any such waste of cider, spirits, sugar, and spice would anger her, and a sound spanking was the inevitable result.

"What shall we do?" anxiously inquired Ananias. "Let's throw it away."

"No," said Sapphira, who had inherited her mother's instinct for economy; "that would be wicked. We must hide it."

"But mother will find it," continued the boy; "and then comes the flogging."

"Oh, I know what we can do," exclaimed the girl with characteristic animation. "Why didn't we think of it before?" And she darted into the little pantry to bring the tankard back to the kitchen where this discussion had been held.

"We must drink all of it, so that there shall be no waste. Then mother will never know how much cider and spirits we used." This proposition seemed like a happy solution of the difficulty. Nothing would be lost, and the mother would simply know that they had entertained Master Johnes with the usual social cup.

To propose a thing was to enter at once upon its execution on the part of Sapphira when it was practicable. Therefore the contents of the tankard were divided, and the two children seated themselves before the big fire in the kitchen and began the making way with this exhilarating and powerful mixture. It was a slow task for both of them, since the strength and the richness of the drink became the more apparent as they indulged freely in it.

"It goes against my stomach," said Sapphira, after she had drunk a fair proportion of her stent. "You will have to finish it, Ananias."

Then she sprang into the middle of the room and began to caper up and down the place with the grotesqueness and extravagance of a court fool. Her brain seemed on fire. She chattered like a magpie. Imagination took wing, and the most absurd and extraordinary visions thronged upon her. Ananias was frightened when first her performances began. But he continued to pursue the task of saving the drink, and it was not long ere he likewise felt a strange excitement and elevation of nature. He was impelled to join Sapphira in her wild rout through the house, except that he wished to get the drink out of the way before his mother came home and they ran the risk of punishment.

At last the contents of the tankard had been securely preserved in the way indicated. Ananias had joined his sister in uncertain and riotous exercises, the house resounded with a strange bedlam of noises, and presented a most unusual and disgraceful state of confusion when the mistress appeared.

"Children, what madness is this which I see? How dare you turn my house upside down? What mean these wild, heathenish cries and such outlandish laughter?"

For reply there continued the reckless performances and the senseless outbursts which greeted Widow Hardy on her entrance. It seemed to her that the Evil One himself had taken possession of home and family—the very

One concerning whom she had read with such interest and wilful infatuation.

Now whatever might be her personal feelings in the matter, she did not propose to give over the children into the hands of the Devil. And for a moment it had not occurred to her that there might be any more reasonable explanation of the state of affairs. But when she caught the fumes of liquor, and saw the empty tankard, and heard the broken speech of Ananias, she reached the conclusion that something in the ordinary line of catastrophe had happened.

"Tell me at once, Sapphira, what is the matter with you!" exclaimed the mother as she started in pursuit of the elusive, mocking child.

"Oh, the Black Man has been to see us, and we have writ our names in his book. He wanted those black books that you read late o' nights, he said. But I told him they were locked in your chest, and he'd have to ask you about it." Then the child darted from the room into the open air, and laughed derisively and tantalizingly at her mother.

"How I will pound you when I get hold of you!" said the distracted woman for reply. But Sapphira feared neither God nor man. She was a wild creature at the best. In her present condition she was absolutely reckless. So Anne Hardy turned her attention to Ananias. But the boy had begun to yield unto the paralyzing and soporific influences of his potations. His tongue

was growing thick. It was hard for him to articulate, and his poor brain was befogged, so that ideas were nebulous.

When his mother took him by the shoulders and tried to shake some intelligence into him he was able to tell her that Master Johnes had called and they had given him, according to her custom, a glass of hot punch. And then the woman was left to infer that the residuum of the beverage had been appropriated by the children. This was not so bad as it might be, but it was bad enough. The goodwife could think of no better way to bring Ananias to his senses than to administer the usual spanking, and then make free applications of cold water as he lay prone on the ground at the back door. A few pails of the fresh liquid, combined with some further shaking and a systematic lashing with her tongue, produced such effect that the boy finally came to himself and gave a fairly intelligible account of the matter. And then his mother put him to bed, pondering in her mind the things which Sapphira had said, muttering to herself such fancies as possessed her, fretted and distressed by the trials of her life, planning secret schemes for the accomplishment of the purposes hidden away within her breast.

It was dark ere Sapphira returned. The child had wandered far into the swamp nigh the settlement where the wolves were accustomed to make their haunts, and she returned with torn clothes

and bruised hands, saying that a wolf had chased her, and that it was simply because her feet were swift and it was close upon the village that she had escaped death itself. Her condition of fright and weakness was pitiable!

"Mother," said the child when she had been undressed, her wounds doctored, and she was quietly resting in bed, "does Satan ever come to us in the form of a wolf? For methinks it was the Evil One that ran after me. His breath was hot, his eyes looked like coals of fire, and he seemed to laugh with cruel glee. Oh me, how fearful was I that he would snatch me away! Mother, what does the black book say?" and the child gazed, with some faint suggestion of mischief in her eyes, straight into her mother's face. The troubled woman flushed under the keen look of the child and hesitated ere she made reply.

"Sapphira, you must not talk about black books."

"But I have seen you read them, mother. Why should I not talk about them?" And the child gave another searching look into the woman's face and waited for a reply.

"Sapphira, such things are beyond the comprehension of a child."

"Don't you understand these things?" continued the little inquisitor. Vexation was manifest upon the countenance of the woman. She knew not what to say in reply, for she wished to avoid further questioning.

"Child, stop your talking and mind your own affairs! What is it to you that I read one book or another which kind friends send me?"

"Mother, I heard about a witch the other day. A sailor down on the beach told me that a witch sold an egg to an Englishman. And when the Englishman got the egg into his hands she used it to change him into a jackass. Then this witch made the jackass-man carry herself and all her butter and eggs to the market. And this sailor told me that the jackass-man served her three years, and then she changed him back again into a common man. Don't you think he must have felt queer, carrying the hag and her butter and eggs on his back? I'd 'a' kicked the ugly thing, or thrown her head first in front of me. Wouldn't you?"

Sapphira had revived under the tender nursing of her mother, and her tongue was again running with its customary speed. The story which the child told had diverted her from the inquisitorial task she had been pursuing with her mother, so that Anne Hardy was given opportunity to collect herself and decide upon her course in respect to the subject opened by Sapphira. But the child did not press her queries further. She was in a talkative mood, and for an hour she continued to chatter without interruption, saying all manner of things and suggesting all manner of reflections. At last she fell asleep, and the mother was left to her own devices.

X

Ananias and Sapphira See the Black Man

Paradise was a place notable for the comparative salubrity of its climate and its general tone of good health. It had been troubled with fewer annoyances than any of its sister towns. New Haven was sadly afflicted with a most vexatious and harassing fever. So the Paradisians at least asserted, and they wrote letters of condolence and encouragement. The people of New Haven of course denied any such chronic state of physical disability and suffering. This is one of the curious effects of malaria upon the moral nature. Like the abuse of certain powerful anodynes, it appears to undermine that strict integrity of character which reveals itself through exact and unquestioned veracity. One has yet to find the town afflicted with this baleful disease which continues to retain the old-time Biblical standard of absolute truth. Prevarication, equivocation, to say nothing about downright lying, are symptomatic of the virus working secretly and maliciously within the system.

Paradise had kept remarkably free from the dread visitation which scourged New Haven.

And this flourishing settlement had been reasonably free from that bold and thoughtless enemy to domestic happiness and community enlargement grotesquely called the mosquito. "Slow-Town" up in Massachusetts was just the place where this pestiferous creature felt at home. For there was a fretwork and fringework of swamps that fostered his development and contentedness.

But Stratford was not further away than second to Boston in this respect. With a modesty ever characteristic of this pleasant Connecticut town, Stratford disclaimed all right to this distinction, but the flats still continued to breed mosquitoes, and send them forth on a sort of missionary service into the adjoining settlements. For if there is one thing more than another in the guise of insect life which conduces to sublime resignation and grim, patient, endurance, it is without doubt the mosquito.

But this particular spring was the occasion of an immense expedition on the part of neighboring mosquitodom. The wily, nervous insects came in solid phalanxes. The warm, damp days of April and May seemed to inspire them with a premature and a ferocious activity. It may have been that immigration had swelled their ranks to such extent that provisions ran low among the citizens of Stratford. The quality of blood food may have deteriorated, so that the insect society felt constrained to seek a richer diet. Whatever

the moving cause, the borders of Paradise were invaded, the air was thick with the hungry host, and for days life became an intolerable burden. People hastened along the streets with such speed that one might have imagined them pursued by the Evil One himself. As they made their swift way it was easy to imagine that they were not in their right mind. For they flung their arms in all directions with apparent purposelessness. They slapped themselves with a vicious impetuosity of spirit that was positively painful. They made sudden lurches to the right or left suggestive of too copious draughts of cider. They sometimes crouched beneath a cloud of the oncoming host, and then made a lively diversion across the street, pursued by the intelligent and voracious creatures. Doubtless a stranger would have said that he was trespassing upon the retirement of some colony for lunatics and imbeciles. To such straits had a small, lively, musical, well-armed, and bloodthirsty insect reduced the peaceful and decorous inhabitants of Paradise.

The Lady Stanley became a sight to behold. She was virgin soil for the mosquito. Her countenance assumed the blotched appearance of an individual thoroughly broken out with measles. Then the poison set the face to swelling, so that she became disfigured beyond recognition. And at length she was compelled to take to her bed and submit to some sort of treatment.

It began to be whispered about that witchcraft had something to do with the condition of things in town. There was first the strange disturbance at the new home of Mr. Stanley. Then there swarmed down upon the people clouds upon clouds of mosquitoes. While it was never considered that Satan would humble himself to the insignificance and pestiferousness of a mosquito, yet it was conceded that he might impress these creatures into his service. Satan had too big a spirit of mischief to get compressed into the miserable little body of this insect. And yet this insignificant thing, taken separately and individually at night in a bedroom, has a power of voice and a keenness of thrust that takes him out from the limbo of triviality and elevates him to a conspicuous pedestal of importance. Why, then, might not Satan, who was in one sense small enough to stoop to anything, creep into a mosquito and ply his hateful business? So there were people who thought that the swarms of malefic insects were simply the fresh hosts of the Evil One which he was all the time leading on.

It must also be stated that, interspersed with the heat, the rain, the chill, the gloom of this particular May, there came several sharp frosts. The buds were blasted, so that the prospects for cider were poor indeed. And many a vegetable garden (and that was the only kind of a garden the majority of the settlers cultivated) was literally cut close to the soil. People feared they might

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not have the very necessaries of life, unless they got them from the sea or found them in the forests.

This power over the elements, this bringing of storm and frost, was a power which had been used on many an occasion to the great annoyance and distress of people. Had not Job himself suffered at the hands of Satan when a mighty tempest blew down the house where his children were feasting, and buried them all in its ruins? So it was currently reported that through the intrigues of the Adversary and his minions these great evils had befallen the inhabitants of Paradise.

But the real scourge was the insidious and baleful fever to which reference has been made. It seemed, in the beginning of the epidemic, that it was to be a mild, every-other-day sickness. But it soon assumed a violent form. Citizens said that New Haven had passed on its vexatious affliction, and Paradise had been the unfortunate recipient of its favor. But they did not jest for long concerning the matter. It grew to be very serious. One household after another was prostrated, until nearly the whole town was under the hard stroke. A message was sent to New Haven, soliciting the help of a physician; but the desired help did not stay the progress of the scourge for weeks. Then one after another poor sufferer succumbed to disease, and the drawn, withered bodies were buried hurriedly on the little knoll looking toward the sea.

These were hard times for Master Johnes. Day after day and night after night he visited the sick and the dying. Faithful in all his loving ministrations, little time was left for work on the farm or in the study. Courtship itself was not in all his thought. And the fever was of such character that depression beclouded every sufferer. It seemed to induce an unfavorable condition of mind. And when a whole neighborhood is afflicted after this manner, it is safe to say that the black clouds which impend are wellnigh impenetrable.

There had been considerable sickness in Stamford and Norwalk similar to the prevailing scourge in Paradise. The fact is, all of these towns suffered to a degree. But this season proved especially distressing and fatal. What explanation was more natural than that some evil-disposed person, in league with the Black Man, was bringing all these troubles upon the orderly and prosperous community?

Among the afflicted the Stanley family seemed chief. Everything had gone wrong with them since they had taken possession of their place. One annoyance after another had followed in swift succession. The loss of domestic fowls and animals had left them with a meagre equipment in that line. Strange noises and inexplicable assaults had made them feel exceedingly uncomfortable. The mosquitoes had descended upon them with an intelligence and ferocity simply pre-

ternatural. The whole family had become so effectually disfigured that dearest friends would have failed to recognize them. Cromwell himself, who had known Mr. Stanley to his exceeding displeasure, would never have found the heart to punish him with a more grievous affliction than he now suffered.

And then, to cap the climax of trouble, every member of the Stanley family yielded to the attack of fever. There could be no doubt that it was "malaria with an eruption" in each case. And there were days when it was difficult to speak with any confidence in respect to the final issue of the event.

The doctor who kindly visited the settlement and tarried for a few days with the sick prescribed the usual remedies, and treated the cases in accordance with the accepted methods, but it was just a question as to the power of nature to resist both disease and medicine. And in too many cases, alas! the battle went against nature.

The life of Mr. Stanley was saved by a curious Providence. It seemed that the end was fast approaching him. The unquenchable thirst which featured his sickness was never indulged. The use of water was restricted to the smallest quantity. And the poor man said a hundred times that he should die of thirst unless they gave him drink.

It happened that the kind old chirurgeon

wore a new wig which his servant, according to orders, had thoroughly powdered just before the visit to Paradise. Sitting by the bedside of Mr. Stanley in the evening, watching the ebb and flow of his life, the doctor grew sleepy, and nodded his head in the direction of the tallow candle which stood close at hand upon the table. At length a nod of unusual profoundness brought the elaborate and expansive wig into contact with the flame of the single tallow dip. There ensued an explosion which was surely the work of the Black Man, for it resounded through the house like the report of a blunderbuss. The wig seemed to have blown up. Strange to say, the doctor escaped unharmed. The sick man, who was prostrated in body and spirit to that degree that he cared naught for such trivial incidents as an exploded wig, saw the opportunity to quench his burning thirst. He sprang nimbly from bed and seized a convenient tankard which was filled with fine old cider, and this dish he drank to the very dregs. Recovery dated from that eventful hour.

Paradise had seen no darker days since the first winter of hard storms and scant fare. But through all the strain and sorrow of this anomalous May, Anne Hardy and her family seemed to thrive. Their little garden escaped the frost. They lost never a chicken or a lamb. Mosquitoes avoided them with a curious persistence. And the fever did not venture an attack. This was

the only household in town that kept free from all these annoyances or visitations.

The widow spent a large portion of her time in nursing the sick. Ananias and Sapphira did the work at home and attended to the land. It was a month of singular calm and satisfaction to the three. But the contrast occasioned a great deal of unfavorable comment in town. People could not understand it. While there were various reasons suggested, there was only one that approved itself to common acceptance. And yet neighbors were loth to speak of it to each other. They talked with bated breath when the subject was introduced. There were only two people these days that discussed the theme of witchcraft in Paradise with free and candid interest, with outspoken and fearless concern.

" Ananias," said Sapphira, " I've found the key to mother's chest. Let's get out some of her books and see what's in them." Such proposition being in sweet accord with the temper of Ananias, the thing was done on the instant. For Widow Hardy was taking care of John and Esther Johnes at the parsonage. This was such a service as she long had sought, and she was really happy in it. With delicate skill and tender solicitude she ministered, and the children responded to her kindness with genuine gratitude and affection. It is doubtful if Mrs. Ludlow had permitted this sojourn in the parson's house on

the part of Anne Hardy; but the fever had stricken the magistrate's lady so that she was beyond the possibility of interference.

When the books were brought into the kitchen the children selected the one which seemed of greatest interest, judging from the well-worn condition of cover and leaves; then they sat them down to investigate and discuss matters.

"Sapphira," said the boy, "I've found where it tells how to make a witch."

A perceptible shiver passed through the frame of the girl. This high-strung, sensitive child was a bundle of nerves, like her mother.

"Shall I tell you how they do it?" he continued.

It was late in the evening. The night was dark and threatening. Anne Hardy had left them alone while she watched with the children of Master Johnes. The big fire on the hearth threw out a cheerful, merry glow, but the low moan of waves on the beach and the restless whispering among the trees made the girl afraid. Nevertheless, curiosity was stronger than any passion of fear.

"Yes, tell me all about it," and Sapphira looked eagerly at the book, then cast a glance over her shoulder toward the shadows of the night, and then drew closer to the brother, sprawled upon the floor with the book outspread before him in the fitful blaze of the firelight.

"'A witch,'" said Ananias, consulting the book, "'is a person that hath an agreement with the

Devil.' You know what an agreement is, don't you."

"Oh, yes. When you promised to take me with you and run away to the Indians if I'd give you all my wampum, and I gave it to you, that was an agreement. But you broke it, you know, for you ran away without me."

"Yes," observed the boy, who was annoyed by this reference to an unpleasant episode in his life. "And it was a lucky thing for you that I didn't take you with me, for then you'd 'a' got such a trouncing as I got."

"Oh, Ananias, what was that?" exclaimed the girl. Then they both listened and heard an owl sound his doleful notes through the gloom of the evening.

"Now stop interrupting, Sapphira. The Devil makes a bargain with the woman. He comes to her and they talk together. Let me see what it says," and Ananias ran his finger along the page and continued:

"'The person must renounce the Christian religion.' What does that mean—renounce? What do they have such big words for? What is it to renounce?" But the word passed their comprehension, so they hastened along.

"'Then the Devil asks the person to worship him.' That's easy enough. 'Then he makes her sign a black book with her blood.' Catch me writing my name in any black book with blood!"

"I'd do that part of it!" exclaimed Sapphira. For it appealed to her imagination, and quite consorted with her elfish notions.

"'Then the Devil teacheth them how to make ointments of the bowels and members of children whereby they ride in the aire and accomplish all their desires.'" Ananias read this latter sentence, and then both the children slammed the book together with a common impulse and looked incredulously into each other's faces.

"Do you believe that?" inquired Ananias huskily. And Sapphira trembled with fright as she hesitated and made reply:

"Why, no, Ananias, it can't be, can it? But I know they ride through the air. I've heard them night after night. Do you think that is the way they get on to broomsticks—by rubbing themselves with such ointment? Oh, Ananias, I wish mother was here, and we hadn't read the book!" And then a sudden gust of wind came down the chimney, and the smoke filled their eyes; and then flame darted out at them; and then something gave each of them such a cuff across the cheek (so they said) that their cheeks stung for an hour with pain.

But there was the book lying closed upon the hearth. And when two or three moments had slipped by, and no further interruptions of a disquieting nature occurred, they yielded to the fascination which was upon them, and once more put themselves into close comradeship upon the

floor. The black book was again opened and the search for truth continued.

"'Witches doo solemnelie vow and promise all their p-r-o-g-e-n-i-e unto the diuell.'" Ananias again read slowly from the book.

"What does that big word mean?" exclaimed the boy as he spelled it out and cudgelled his brain for a definition.

"Some awful thing, I warrant me," replied the precocious child.

"Mayhap it means children! I'd like to see anybody sell me to the Black Man! I'd scratch his eyes out!"

"Oh, Sapphira, hear this! It just scares me out of my wits to read it! 'Witches boile infants until their flesh be made pot-a-ble.' I wonder what it is to be pot-a-ble?"

"Ananias, do you suppose the babies that have died here have been made pot-a-ble? That must mean that they have been cooked in a pot! Isn't it horrible! How glad I am we're nearly grown up!" And the child's eyes grew large and luminous with excitement.

Ananias had gotten used to the wicked things written in the book, so that he began to assert himself and brave the terrors that had been awakened within him. He continued the reading with fair command of his voice.

"'Witches kill men's cattell.' I knew that," he remarked sagely.

"That's what's the matter with Mr. Stanley's

cattle. They are bewitched. 'They bewitche men's corne, and bring hunger into the countrie, and make stormes, and——"

"Quick, quick, Ananias, look at the window! Run!" shrieked Sapphira, and she suited her action to her words, and sprang across the shadowy room, and flung herself into the little stairway that led to the small chamber above.

Ananias looked in the direction indicated, and saw in the black space of the window not so much an indistinct form as two great fiery eyes, gleaming like white-hot coals, fixed upon the inmates of the house with an intensity of malign expression simply indescribable. It did not take the boy any longer time than it did Sapphira to measure the short space across the room and spring into the entry by the side of his sister.

There was only one thought in the minds of both children. The Black Man had heard them reading out of the book and he was come to punish them for rash curiosity. So they waited breathlessly for the next move on the part of their enemy. If ever two children shook with fear, their names were Ananias and Sapphira. They had shut themselves away into the darkness, but they could hear their own teeth chatter, and feel the thin floor shake with their nervous tremors. It is not a very hard matter to get frightened to death. And these two children came near to it on this awful occasion.

It seemed to them that an hour must have

passed. They had not even spoken a word. They clung to each other in the darkness with an agony of horror. But at last reason returned. Ananias proposed that they go upstairs and look down from the window upon the object which they had certainly seen.

Slowly and cautiously they crept their way along until they reached the window, which enabled them to gaze down into the darkness A faint light proceeded from the kitchen window below them. Their hearts gave a mighty thump, and it seemed as if some hand gripped them by the throat (it was simply a convulsive movement on their own part) when they saw, distinctly outlined against the faintly illumined shades of the night, a great black form whose arms were stretched forth to rest upon the window-sill. The head was still bent with intent gaze toward the room.

Then it was that the wild nature of Sapphira asserted itself with a courage and rashness which bordered upon insanity. There was no doubt in her mind that the Black Man was before them. They could see his form and almost hear him breathe. Perhaps he had come to take them away. It was like him to transport them into the forest, and there force them into his service. There had been a sort of dread fascination in the thing as they read about it and talked concerning the marvellous powers with which he was able to endow his

minions. But when the children came face to face, as it were, with his Satanic Majesty, it was too awful an ordeal for them to accept. Sapphira, with one of those quick transitions characteristic of childhood, suddenly longed for the things which are good and true. A great hatred of the Devil and all his work flamed within her bosom. Master Johnes was her ideal soul. He belonged to God. She loved him in her own strange way. If she went with the Black Man a wide gulf must forever separate her from this blessed friend. What were all the tedious catechisings, and the little lectures on behavior, and the inevitable readings of the Bible, and the regular goings to meeting, and everything else pertaining to religion, grievous and burdensome as they might be to her, when offset by the kindness, the interest, the affection, the friendship of such a good man as the minister? If they went with the Black Man they might have a great deal of fun and see all kinds of wild things, but they could never be friends with Master Johnes again. And that meant the loss to them of the best thing in life.

Now all these thoughts, and many akin to them, passed through the active brain of the child in the moment that she seemed spellbound by the presence of the black figure at the kitchen window. With a swift movement which Ananias in his terror tried to prevent, Sapphira raised the window and leaned directly over the indistinct form.

Then with a voice betraying intensest feeling, shrill in its pathetic earnestness, vibrant with mingled passions of fear, anger, hatred, she cried:

"Go away, Black Man! Go away! You can't have us! We belong to God! We've been baptized! Go away, I tell you! Go away!" And she stamped her little foot upon the floor, and her voice rose in its strength until the last words ended in a piercing shriek.

As if to give emphasis to her orders, she reached instinctively through the dark until her hand rested upon a brick which had been used to hold the bedroom door open, and this humble weapon was grasped with firm hold, then poised for a second in air, and then flung with all her power straight down upon the head of the shadowy being that stood beneath her. The children heard the brick hit some object which sounded to them like a real cranium. But they gave no heed to the matter at the time. Sapphira stood close by the window and closed her eyes.

"Pray, Ananias, pray!" she said. And both of these children prayed. They literally poured forth their souls in honest, sincere petition. The supplications of Ananias assumed an ejaculatory form. His command of language for this sort of an emergency was very limited. But Sapphira revealed a gift. Her speech was clear, frank, and forcible.

"O Lord," she prayed, "we know that Satan goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he

may devour. He is right under this window. I've told him to go away. I've hit him with a brick. Please to bring your Almighty hand down on him, so that his ears will ring and his eyes will be blinded with pain. Oh, get him away from this house before he carries us off to the woods! We'll be so good and thankful! We love Master Johnes. I'll never laugh in meeting again. Please drive him away!"

Then it seemed to occur to Sapphira that perhaps her prayer was put in a too-familiar form of address. On the instant she changed tone, language, manner. Her wonderful memory stood her in good part. For she imitated Master Johnes with a correctness and elaboration that would have been simply ludicrous had it not been so inexpressibly solemn. She began her second prayer with the exact phraseology peculiar to the minister in his pulpit. She gave the stereotyped sentences of adoration, quoting various phrases from the Psalmist. Then followed the general and the particular confession of sin, given with great amplitude. Then came the petitions, which were numerous and extended. Their richness in Scripture metaphor and simile was the most noticeable feature. After repeated desires for fresh inspiration and hearty thanks for past mercies, the prayer concluded with the conventional forms peculiar to the prayer-book with which her mother had made her acquainted.

The prayer occupied at least ten minutes. And it was a great feat of memory. But that phase of the exercise was furthest from the thought of brother or sister. The task in which they were engaged was too serious for any folly or pretension. They were as earnest about it as ever were two souls engaged in a like exercise. They came to a sudden faith in the efficacy of prayer, and they prayed the prayer of faith. When it was ended Sapphira was the first to speak.

"Ananias, I feel better! The Black Man must have gone away! Yes," continued the child as she peered into the darkness and leaned out of the window. "He's gone! God has heard our prayer!"

"How did he look?" inquired the boy, speaking in a whisper, and still thinking that he might possibly be lingering in the immediate neighborhood.

"Oh, I can't bear to think of it!" said Sapphira. "He was big, and black, and *you* saw his awful eyes! Ananias, we must do something with the book!"

"Let's burn it up!" he whispered. So they lowered the window and silently, watchfully crept downstairs, first looking through a crack of the door into the kitchen to see that everything was just as they had left it. But where was the book? Had they not dropped it when they ran for the entry? And did it not fall close by the

fire in the bright light, the conspicuous object in the room?

"Ananias, I know what has become of it!" Sapphira spoke in a husky, awestruck tone of voice. "The Black Man came for the book and he has taken it away with him."

Ananias did not doubt that explanation, although he had an impression that when he flung the book away it went toward the fire, and it was easy for one to imagine that a faint odor of burnt leather pervaded the room. Nevertheless, it was believed by the children that Satan had taken his literature away with him. So they locked the chest, and then sat them down to await the dawning of the day.

XI

The Parson Goes a-Fishing

Master Johnes was hard-pressed these days. The general conditions of life in town gave him infinite anxiety and sorrow. Such a May he never remembered! That depression of spirit which accompanied the prevailing fever was infectious! He had sickness in his own home, although Widow Hardy and his faithful Indian servant were carrying the children safely through their trouble. There were also the illness and the misfortunes of the Stanley family to burden him! He felt a sort of responsibility for their comfort and happiness, even though he had not invited them to emigrate. Then the mosquito pest had grown almost intolerable, and he had come to think that it was a sign of Heaven's displeasure, so that he seriously contemplated a special day of fasting and prayer for the parish. Connected with this grievous annoyance was the destructive frost, which came to intermit the mosquito ordeal. And chief trial and perplexity of all was the faint intimation of witchcraft, which people cautiously whispered in his ears! For with the multiplication and pressure of these afflictions the

malefic influences of witches were more and more closely connected by common report and belief. But there were days when things looked brighter, and Master Johnes gathered strength for new burdens.

One afternoon he called at the Stanley home and carried away with him a little book, just issued from the press in London, and forwarded to Mr. Stanley, who had been a famous sportsman in the mother-country. The book was entitled, "The Compleat Angler." The author was some unknown commercial individual who loved fishing, his name being Isaak Walton. Now Master Johnes had never been much of a fisherman, but he enjoyed hunting on occasion, and had joined many a party of Paradisians in short trips for venison and various toothsome birds which haunted these coasts.

On the recommendation of Mr. Stanley he took the new book home with him, and soon lost himself in the simple, alluring narrative of piscatorial experiences. And the book quickened in him a desire to revive an honorable sport, which was not altogether unfamiliar to him in the days of youth.

It chanced a day or two later that Anne Hardy said the children craved some trout. This particular fish abounded in certain streams, which came from the back country, and coursed their way through Paradise to the sea. So Master Johnes said unto himself that he would borrow

the necessary equipment from Mr. Stanley and go a-fishing.

He arose betimes in the morning that he might have an early start, and was soon on the way to the stream which he had chosen for the exercise of his art. It was only a portion of the day which he proposed to devote to this little airing, but he anticipated it with peculiar delight. It would afford a break in the manifold cares which had weighed with such heaviness upon him the last month. It would also give him sweet opportunity for communion with nature. For Master Johnes loved the flowers and the trees. He would spend many happy hours in their study, had he not considered it a waste of time and strength. Nature was to him an open book, inviting his poet soul to master its beautiful secrets, but the social environment of his life was antagonistic to that sort of study. The people of the New World counted it contrary to religion to give attention unto these foolish things. Especially was such a course unpardonable in a parson.

But this spring outing in search of fish for the sick was good excuse for the little excursion of Master Johnes; so he pushed through the dewy fields, into the shadowy woods, down to the gurgling waters, with glad heart.

Now it was not only "The Compleat Angler" that had inspired the parson to go a-fishing; but is was "The Compleat Angler" that he expected to take with him on the trip. He slipped it into

one of the pockets of his flaring and voluminous coat-tail, therefore, and hastened along the way with almost boyish vivacity and sprightliness. The book was in his mind all the time. He had been charmed with it. The pages which he had already seen carried him back to happy days of yore, amid the green fields and singing birds and sweet smells of the early home-land.

As he walked meditatively along the way, the gray dawn shot its pencillings over the eastern sky, then blushes suffused the horizon, and, at last, the sun itself came riding gloriously in a chariot of golden splendor. As the choruses of the robins and the other songsters filled his ears, he quoted the lines of George Herbert:

"Hark, how the birds do sing,
And woods do ring;
All creatures have their joy, and man hath his!"

Master Johnes felt that a measure of his joy had come in that early adventure into the woods by the running waters. His heart overflowed with thanksgivings for the mercies of life.

"But who hath praise enough? Nay, who hath any?
None can express Thy works but he that knows them;
And none can know Thy works, which are so many,
And so complete, but only He that owes them."

Again Master Johnes recited from Herbert. And then overcome with the joy and glory of the hour, he stood by the hasting, songful waters and poured forth his soul in prayer. There was

nothing stereotyped or conventional about his orison. It was the fresh, gushing stream of a pure devotional spirit. Alone with God and nature, he was upborne as on eagles' wings, and tarried long in prayer, his very person bathed with a splendor of light which seemed an emanation from the soul within him. It was a full hour ere he left the sacred spot and pushed a little farther up the stream.

And now the book was in his hand, and he threaded a slow way through bushes and amid trees. These were some of the words he read:

"I have found in myself that the very sitting by the river-side is not only the fittest place for, but will invite the angler to, contemplation."

Now it seemed to him that here was proof of it. While he tarried by the water his mind was thronged with sweet and gracious thoughts, and he forgot the grave and wearisome perplexities which he had left behind him.

"This Isaac Walton seemeth to me to be a discerner of the truth," observed the solitary fisherman. Then he profited by the text which he had just read, and threw himself down upon a mossy seat close by the stream, and continued his reading of the book. The lines quoted from Sir Henry Wotton so pleased him that he read them a second time:

"This day Dame Nature seemed in love;
The lustie sap began to move;
Fresh juice did stir the imbracing vines,
And birds had drawn their valentines."

There was a long period of perfect quiet which followed. The fish jumped from the water in their eager pursuit of fli s. The birds continued their jubilee. The fluttering leaves whispered all sorts of messages to each other. The buzz and hum of harmless, busy insects contributed a subtone of harmony. And Master Johnes yielded his soul unto the gracious, tranquil charm of nature's ministry. Then he picked up his book and continued:

"Let them that list these pastimes still pursue,
And on such pleasing fancies feed their fill,
So I the fields and meadows green may view,
And daily by fresh rivers walk at will,
Among the daisies and the violets blue,
Red hyacinths and yellow daffadil."

What a vision of familiar scenes rose before him in response to the suggestion of these verses! He was once more in his first parish, surrounded by the things which spake of beauty, culture, enjoyment. He heard again the sound of church bells and grand organ. The gay company of worshippers passed before him in swift procession. There were stately country houses, and great parties lavishly entertained. The easy, merry life of the peasantry and yeomanry recurred to him. He recalled some of Ben Jonson's songs, and the "Midsummer's Night's Dream," of William Shakespeare. Then he began to recite some of the devout words of George Herbert on "The Country Parson."

He was reclining still upon his moss-bank, wrapped in profound meditation, or engaged in lively reminiscence, when he suddenly became conscious of an interested observer. It was not so much the crushing of underbrush and the rustling of dead leaves, as it was the concentrated gaze of two big, staring eyes fixed in wonderment upon him. Just across the stream there stood a great black bear. His attitude was not one of hostility. It suggested friendly interest and the spirit of investigation. But Master Johnes was not the man to permit a bear to look him out of countenance. When leaving home in the morning he had wisely carried along his musket, as was usual on all excursions into the woods. And when this creature awakened the parson from his meditations, it did not take a moment for Master Johnes to put himself into a position of self-defence, aim at the most vulnerable part of the beast, and discharge his musket. He was a good shot, and the work was well done; for the creature fell without a struggle. Then the hunter-fisherman looked into the heavens and saw the sun drawing nigh to its meridian. And this was the time which he had set for his return. So he hastened with all speed back to Paradise, only stopping on the hill which overlooks the town to observe the stretch of field and forest, the network of land and sea lying beneath him.

It was past the noon hour when he reached

the parsonage. Anne Hardy had dressed the children for the first time during their illness, and they were waiting impatiently for the coming of their father.

"Where can he be?" anxiously inquired Esther. "Methinks he has gone to the mill-stream for fish," answered their kind nurse.

"And methinks that mother must know," interrupted Sapphira, who had come with Ananias to see the invalids, and tarry to dinner. "For mother has many ways of knowing things which we wot not of." Now this remark did not please the woman, but she let it passed uncorrected, since she was loth to disturb John and Esther by any little matter of discipline on this day of their reappearance at the table. But further remark on the subject was unnecessary, for Master Johnes presented himself at the moment and greeted the family with his accustomed courtesy.

"And are the children to sit with us at table?" he inquired with loyal concern and genuine gratitude.

"Yes, Master Johnes," replied the widow, "and I warrant me now that you have been seeking some toothsome fare with which to surprise them."

"How many trout did you catch, and where is your fish-pole, Master Johnes?" inquired the observant Sapphira. And then the good man's face was suffused with blushes, and a look of confusion came into his eyes.

"Hi! hi! hi!" laughed the irrepressible child. "Master Johnes has been a-fishing, and he forgot to take a rod.". Then Widow Hardy laughed, and John and Esther joined in the merriment, and finally Ananias himself comprehended the situation, and added his boisterous contribution to the general disturbance. Even the faithful Indian woman, who had served the parson since his advent in Paradise, had a curious twinkle in her eyes, and turned suddenly away as if to hide any small sign of merriment.

Alas, it was true! The absorbed man had taken to fishing with "The Compleat Angler" in pocket and on mind. But living on a plane distinct from the plane of fish-hooks, fancy flies, and divers kinds of tackle, he had forgotten these essential factors, and given himself with glad and sweet abandon to the enjoyment of nature. It was a curious and yet withal profitable fishing excursion. For the morning's outing had freshened and invigorated the weary man, so that much of the cloud which brooded above him was dispelled. Then his return had been greeted with such hearty, sympathetic laughter as had not been heard in the house for many a month. It was like a medicine to the children—this good-natured banter and enjoyment.

And more than all, it seemed to clear away the depression which had become the common feature of their life for the last few weeks, and put all the inmates of the house on a footing of cordial fel-

lowship. None of them thought at the time how such levity was not in accord with the sober decorum of a minister's home, or the accepted notions of Puritanic dignity. For an hour they even forgot the trials of sickness and disaster, and spake not at all concerning the various harassments which continued to vex the community. Again and again Sapphira laughed at thought of such a fishing trip. More than thrice did Master Johnes tell the story of the big black bear. And long did he dilate upon the beauty of the landscape, the freshness and inspiration of nature, the joy of life in fellowship with trees, flowers, brooks, skies, birds, and the manifold creations which appealed to the soul. "Verily, Chaucer spake the truth," observed Master Johnes when the family was seated at the table enjoying the abundant fare of the parsonage. "'Nature is the vicar of the Almightie Lord,' but we are slow of understanding, and our sense grows dull with sin."

"In Nature's infinite book of secrecy, a little I can read," observed Anne Hardy, quoting from the play of "Antony and Cleopatra." But it was not so much the poetry of creation which she had in mind as it was the strange secrets of plants, forces, elements. She had pried into these with the intense, persistent earnestness of some student of science. And a reward had come to her in the skill and knowledge which she manifested when ministering to the sick. Yet

the modicum of mastery over nature's gifts simply stimulated her to further experiment. Through these two weeks of service in the parson's family she had come to believe that some of the charms or potions which she had so laboriously concocted, according to recipes imported from France, and secretly introduced into the food and drink of Master Johnes, had really produced the desired effect.

For while her attendance was occasioned by the illness of the children, yet it had given her opportunity to serve the minister himself in various acceptable ways which he had learned to value. She had put the house in good order. She had mended linen and clothes. She had prepared many a savory dish. She had sought, in every legitimate way, to make herself useful and attractive. Not that she obtruded herself upon Master Johnes. She was fairly reserved and discreet in this respect. But there were innumerable ways in which he was made to feel that a woman of faculty tarried with him. The neatness and orderliness of the house became almost painful through his lack of familiarity with that sort of thing. He was not quite sure that he still lived at home. And during these days the Widow Hardy had governed herself with exemplary self-control. She had no Ananias and Sapphira at the parsonage to bother her! John and Esther were sick in bed, and very grateful for her maternal watch-care, so that they were all the time wooing

forth the better instincts and quickening the nobler impulses of the woman! And then she had hours of friendly converse with Master Johnes, while she was engaged in the tender offices of nurse. What an opportunity for gaining the favor and regard of a susceptible heart!

Yet there were hours when she felt uncertain in respect to her progress in this matter. Deference, gratitude, friendliness present strong contrasts to the kind of love which Anne Hardy longed to awaken! So that there came occasional rebounds of spirit, when all that was evil seemed stirred within her, and she found it wellnigh impossible to hold in check the bitter things which rose to her lips and cried for utterance. The charm of this hour at table, when the two families were together, and life appeared like a thing in common between them, was a charm that was destined to be broken through by the very reaction induced by such harmony and enjoyment, just as there often comes to us, in the moment of keen delight and subtlest happiness, sharp and inexplicable pain—the very excess of pleasurable emotions shading off into a kind of intangible distress or sadness.

The conversation took an unexpected turn by reason of the curiosity peculiar to Sapphira. She possessed all the native inquisitiveness ascribed to the typical New Englander. And her mind was running in the direction of witchcraft these days. She had seen enough, and heard enough,

to awaken any curiosity that might have been latent within her. But her habitual mood of investigation was sufficient explanation of the question she now put to Master Johnes.

Since a certain event, which was known only to Ananias and herself, the active mind of the child had thought of little else than this important subject. She longed to ask questions, and get difficulties solved that bothered her little brain. Widow Hardy had observed that Sapphira was much more obedient and dutiful on this morning than she had ever known her to be in all her life. She naturally supposed that such good manners were the result of her own absence from home, and the child's constraint in the parsonage. But the fact was, that Sapphira had grown to be afraid of her mother. She was dutiful on this occasion, because she believed her mother possessed occult or supernatural powers.

"Master Johnes" (she spoke just above a whisper, and there was a manifest tremor in the voice quite unusual with her), "was the witch of Endor a bad woman?" Now the witch of Endor was one of the Bible characters that had given the minister many hours of severe study. He had not considered so much the moral character of the woman, as the fact that she appeared to exercise supernatural powers, and show a familiarity with the spirit realm, that was most interesting and suggestive. Then the incident was conclusive

evidence in respect to the reality of communications with the unseen world; although it had been explained that on this occasion the Lord actually sent the spirit of Samuel unto Saul, that he might rebuke both the king and the necromancer. As the minister did not reply on the instant, and the mind of the child worked with wonderful rapidity, she followed the first question with a second:

"If the Devil makes witches, why did people say of Simon, who bewitched the people of Samaria, that this man is the great power of God?" Now these questions, asked in the most serious way, showed that Sapphira had not only been reading her Bible, but that she had been puzzling her head with great mysteries. But ere Master Johnes had opportunity to make any reply, the mother interposed.

"Sapphira, you don't know what you are talking about! You can't understand such things! It's none of your business whether the witch of Endor was a good woman or a bad one. I prithee, child, who has been talking to thee about Simon, the sorcerer, or any other wizard!"

"I read it myself," said Sapphira. "Didn't Master Johnes tell me to read the Bible, and havn't I read it every day since you have been away, even to spelling out the biggest words and the ugliest names?" Nothing could intimidate Sapphira, when it came to a question of self-defence. Had she not shown a spirit superior to all

cowardice on the night that the Black Man visited them? And now when her mother rebuked her for doing that which good Master Johnes had encouraged her to do, the native force of the child immediately asserted itself. Her eyes flashed. Anne Hardy might possess supernatural power. It was possible that she might turn her own child into some grovelling or ferocious brute, according to Sapphira's way of thinking; nevertheless, Sapphira was bound to stand for her rights, and she felt quite sure that Master Johnes would come to her rescue.

"The child is asking questions that are very puzzling, my friend," said the minister. "But it seemeth to me that it is natural for her to ask them. She is a thoughtful little girl, and we must help her to learn the truth, for the truth shall make her free."

"Yes—very free, Master Johnes; altogether too free. She knows too much now. She's forever asking questions. And she watches me like the foxes watch our chickens. But you may answer her if you choose." The Widow Hardy was trying to bridle her wrath and conduct herself with propriety.

"Well, Sapphira, methinks the witch of Endor was a bad woman, for the Lord had forbidden the practice of witchcraft in Israel, and there was a law against it. All such practices are wicked in the sight of God, and our own native country, as well as this New England, hath pronounced

against these things." The minister spake very gravely.

"But the Bible says that Simon was sorry for his sins, and was baptized. Do you think he was saved?" continued the child. And it was not curiosity alone that was manifested in the look and tone of Sapphira. There was an expression of honest anxiety, an undertone of deep feeling; while Anne Hardy grew more nervous and restless, and Ananias turned pale with fear.

"We must certainly believe that Simon was saved, since he repented of his sin, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ," replied the minister.

"Then a witch may be among the elect, Master Johnes?" continued Sapphira with evident relief and hopefulness. Now this was not the way that the minister would choose to state the case, and he was about to correct the child when the mother rose abruptly from her place and crossed the room, apparently in search of some object which was required at the table.

"Master Johnes," whispered Sapphira, "do mothers ever sell their children to the Devil?"

Anne Hardy heard the question, and it seemed to destroy her self-possession, for her face flushed and her eyes shot forth a strange light, and she made a swift movement in the direction of the child. Sapphira was watchful, feeling instinctively that the woman might fall upon her. For there was an inner significance to this whole conversation thorough-

ly appreciated by every member of the Hardy family. So when the mother turned in the direction of her child, and cast upon her a look of passion, the child slipped from her chair to the floor and passed into a fit. Her eyes rolled wildly in her head; her checks lost their color and became marble-white; harsh, discordant noises proceeded from her throat; she flung her limbs into various contortions; then she lay senseless.

Esther screamed with uncontrollable terror. Thin and weak, it took a very little thing to throw her off her balance. John cried in sheer feebleness. Ananias moaned and shivered. For he connected the occurrence with the advent of the Black Man, and he felt his helplessness in the difficulty.

Master Johnes hastened to carry the unconscious child out of doors, and sprinkle her face with water and rub her hands back to warmth. The Indian servant stood by the fireplace and muttered incantations, stamping her foot and tossing her arms in the air, calling upon one knows not what. While the widow stood in the centre of the room like a person dazed, or bereft of reason for a moment. Then awaking from her strange mood, she devoted herself with all the tenderness and affection of a woman's nature to the ailing children of Master Johnes. Her own child seemed not in all her thought. But Esther was soothed and quieted. John was mothered until his agitation and excitement had

passed away. And when the hour was gone peace once more pervaded the household. Anne Hardy had taken John and Esther back into the parlor, where they had been nursed during their illness. They were gotten to bed, and then they fell asleep. While Master Johnes and Ananias waited upon Sapphira until she was herself again, and then the three passed down the street and came to the home of the children. Here the minister finally left them. Returning to his own house, he hastened into his study, and there spent the remaining hours of the day in fasting and prayer.

That night Anne Hardy came back to her own cottage.

XII

Roger Ludlow Discusses Witchcraft with the Lady Stanley

One discusses the theme of witchcraft in the colony with a feeling of sadness. But let us disabuse ourselves of false and uncharitable prepossessions, and, so far as the thing is possible, recreate the conditions that prevailed, so that we may share the spirit of common life in this early Connecticut.

Belief in witchcraft was an inheritance. The history of the dread thing takes its rise in the vagueness and obscurity of race-beginnings. The people of New England were Bible people. And witchcraft was one of the things forbidden by Holy Scripture. A thing which did not exist, and had never existed, would certainly not be forbidden by the Word of God. Such was the reasoning of the colonists.

The law of Moses was unequivocal upon the subject. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." "A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall be surely put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." "There shall not be found among

you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

Such explicitness was not to be gainsaid by men who took the Bible for their guide, in politics as well as religion. While New Haven made membership in the church a requisite for the franchise, and thus emulated Israel itself in theocratic conception, and while Hartford, Saybrooke, and other communities insisted upon requirements somewhat less exacting, yet all the towns were one in their attitude toward witchcraft. They believed in it just as they believed in other teachings of the Bible. Moses legislated against it, and they followed his example.

It is also to be remembered that the ages are witnesses to such credulity, on the part of numerous tribes and nations. The story of witchcraft is a story not yet finished. It has taken all these centuries to write it, and still the record keeps adding to itself.

The people of New England were familiar with the history and the literature of this subject. Witch experiences, so common in the Old World, were repeated with numerous embellishments in the New.

The Indian traditions concerning sorcery helped to strengthen the faith of the settlers in supernatural interferences.

Then we are to remember how large a part of theology was devoted to demonology and kindred themes, so that the contest between good and evil spirits was emphasized to such extent, and stated in such terms, that he must have been a brave and independent thinker, indeed, who ventured to say that the Devil and his minions did not take a very conspicuous office in the management of this world's affairs.

When scholars, statesmen, rulers, poets, ministers of the gospel believe in witchcraft, and support their faith by the witnesses of forty centuries and more, it is becoming in us to speak with charity upon the subject.

In April, 1646, the General Court desired Mr. Ludlow "to take some paynes in drawing forth a body of lawes for the gouerment of the commonwealth." The code, usually called "Mr. Ludlow's Code," was established by the General Court, May, 1650; but the capital law against witchcraft was passed the first of December, 1642, and incorporated in the code prepared by Mr. Ludlow: "If any man or woman be a witch—that is, hath or consulteth a familiar spirit—they shall be put to death."

The various adversities which afflicted Paradise at the time of this writing were by common consent ascribed to witchcraft. So that when Master Johnes called upon the Stanley family one June morning the conversation naturally turned in the direction of this subject. The Stanleys had

been afflicted above others. But on the return of health they had entered with renewed hope into the work of the season. Mr. Stanley had gathered about him a number of faithful servants, and the farm had been put into fair condition. His wife and sister-in-law and the children were still thin, pale, languid; yet they were able to enjoy the calls of friends, and on this occasion Roger Ludlow and his wife were present.

"It is a matter of great import," observed the governor. "We must proceed with due caution and carefulness. But methinks it is time for us to make a beginning. What other settlement in this colony hath been so afflicted and distressed?"

"True," said Master Johnes. "And what family hath suffered more deeply than our friends in this house? Yet it beseemeth us to move with great circumspection in affairs of such moment."

"For my part, I cannot believe that witchcraft hath aught to do with our troubles?" remarked the Lady Stanley. "They are best explained by our transition from one climate to another, by our ignorance in respect to the affairs of the farm, and by the ill-will of unknown disturbers of our peace. Thus doth it seem to me. I do not wish to charge any person with this contagion of fever, or this pest of mosquitoes, or our strange annoyances and petty persecutions. We shall recover from these things, and learn how to bear ourselves with becoming patience and fortitude."

But Roger Ludlow did not agree with the speaker.

"There can be no doubt that certain people cultivate familiarity with Satan," he observed. "They carry upon their person the witch-marks. They show, by character, this intimacy. They are given marvellous powers, which are used for wicked purposes. Think you we had made laws for the punishment of wizards, had there been no such creatures? And the Word of God, as Master Johnes hath told us many times, commands us to avoid association with such people, and to punish the crime with death. I remember that in Lancaster seventeen witches were condemned on the testimony of one boy in the year 1634."

"Alas, it was a sad tragedy, too! God pity the poor, deluded people!" exclaimed the lady.

Mr. Ludlow did not like to hear any person speak with such skepticism upon this subject, for he had given it much thought, and counted himself well informed. And one of the peculiarities of the times was that men suspected the very people who denied the possibility or probability of this commerce with Satan. It mattered not what might be their social position, their importance in the community, their intelligence or their power.

"Hast thou given due consideration to the subject?" inquired the lawyer. "A great array of eminent men testify to the presence and activity

of Satan. It cometh to my mind how the God-fearing Martin Luther relates that this enemy of mankind came into his room by night, at Wartburg, and got hazel-nuts out of a box where Master Luther had put them. These nuts the Devil cracked against the bedpost, making a very great noise, but little attention was paid to the disturbance by the godly man. When he fell asleep, however, there was a much greater noise, which he describes like many empty barrels and hogsheads being tumbled down-stairs."

"But might not Martin Luther have been deceived?" inquired Lady Stanley.

"The worthy man was simply one of thousands equally trustworthy and reliable that have given unimpeachable evidence concerning witchcraft. Have not our poets written of it? What saith Spenser in the "Faerie Queene?"

"'There in a gloomy, hollow glen, she found
A little cottage built of sticks and weedes,
In homely wise, and wald with sods around,
In which a witch did dwell in loathly weedes
And wilful want, all careless of her needes;
So choosing solitarie to abide,
Far from all neighbors, that her devilish deedes
And hellish arts from people she might hide,
And hurt far off unknowne whomever she envide.'"

Mr. Ludlow was not only a man "unsurpassed in the knowledge of the law and of the rights of mankind," as Bancroft describes him, but he was a man of wide reading and varied attainments.

The literature of witchcraft had been carefully examined, and the poets likewise had been read with thoroughness and appreciation.

"That unmatched master of English, William Shakespeare, hath spoken in many ways upon the subject. Do you not remember the scene in Macbeth?

"'What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth
And yet are on 't?' "

"Worthy sir, I have read these and kindred passages often in the quiet hours of my attendance at court, but I have always interpreted them as the weird fancies of our great poets, or their truthful representations of the prevailing superstition of the day. Think you that Spenser, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, and men like them believed these things?"

"Methinks they were firm believers in the arts of sorcery, magic, and demonology. For there was every reason that they should accept the teachings and evidences of past ages. Doth not Roger Bacon tell us how the witch ointment is made? The fat of children digged out of their graves, the juices of smallage, wolf-bone, cinquefoil, mingled with the meal of fine flour?"

Lady Stanley shivered perceptibly when the governor was speaking. It became evident to her that he was not pleased with the tone of her objections. Roger Ludlow did not like to

have his opinions controverted, even when the disputant was a charming woman. He had assumed the usual magisterial or dictatorial tone in the discussion, and as he continued his conversation it became more and more evident that the lady whom he addressed chiefly in his exposition of the subject was one that did not meet his favor.

It must not be supposed that the advent of the Stanley family was agreeable to the entire community. And with the succession of weeks, it had been learned that Mr. Stanley was a warm partisan of young Prince Charles. His coming to Paradise was therefore interpreted as a sort of makeshift. It was currently reported that he would tarry for a time, and when the day came that the heir to the throne of England needed his services, then Mr. Stanley was to leave the colony, and hasten back to England. He might carry himself with propriety. He might be very courteous and companionable. He might spend money freely among them, and prove a help in certain ways; yet the fact that Paradise was simply a convenience, and that he hated Cromwell and his Parliament, was sufficient to offset any small advantage incident to his settlement.

But along with this report concerning the brother-in-law, there were circulated cruel insinuations in respect to the Lady Stanley. The stories were of a character to disturb the peace of a Puritan settlement. The lady had frankly told the

people whom she met that her services of attendance at the court of Charles I. had thrown her into friendly relations with royal personages. But it would appear that some malicious tongue had connected her name with the name of royalty to her discredit and unhappiness. And there are tongues which wag ceaselessly when there is opportunity to circulate reports derogatory to character. Lady Stanley was altogether unconscious of this vicious, heartless injustice done her. But she had come to realize already tha her first cordial welcome was a thing of the past.

XIII

They Keep a Day of Fasting and Prayer

It had recently been observed that Master Johnes was a frequent visitor at the Stanley home. And it had been suggested, although it was impossible to trace the suggestion to its origin, that the Lady Stanley was the great attraction. Could it be that Anne Hardy had observed these things, and intimated something of the kind to her neighbors? But how was this possible, when the woman was ministering to the sick at the parsonage, and she found no opportunity to go into a single other house, or even attend to the needs of Ananias and Sapphira at home?

However the report may be explained, it was soon current that Master Johnes appeared often at the Stanleys. And it seemed altogether out of keeping with propriety and spiritual sentiment that he should become entangled with a titled woman, whose antecedents were mysterious, if not reprehensible and offensive. The general conditions of sickness and adversity and depression in the town had kept people fairly busy with their own trials and sufferings; but a neighborhood is never too busy for the dissemination of

news or gossip. And a little provincial settlement, shut away in the wilderness, must live within itself, or upon itself, to a large extent. Hence it resulted that his townsmen did not regard with favor the interest which Master Johnes evinced in the late emigrants.

We are not to think, however, that the people of Paradise did not wish their minister to marry. The contrary was true. Marriage was the natural state of a man. Home lots were given, taxes abated, special favors shown for the purpose of pressing men and women into this relation. And when husband or wife departed this life, etiquette did not require a long period of mourning and loneliness. A few weeks or a few months were deemed sufficient. The swifter the courtship the more satisfactory to the community.

When Master Johnes had passed two or three months of widower life, the parish felt that a wife should be chosen for him. The good women that assume the office of guide and inspector on these interesting occasions took counsel together and made their selection. The result was communicated to the parson at the proper time. He accepted it with becoming deference and gratitude. But Master Johnes did not commit himself in the matter. The loving concern of his people was sweet to him. And he knew that his self-elected advisers had his interests at heart. But he declined their overtures

and suggestions with fine tact, and give them to understand that he must defer the matter for a few months.

Had it rested at this point, all had gone well. But it was soon observed that Widow Hardy devoted herself to him with a sincerity and a persistence that appalled her neighbors. So the time came when it was necessary for the self-appointed committee of women to visit Master Johnes again, and disclose the mind of the town in respect to the Widow Hardy. He listened to their wise counsels and observations with becoming respect. For they spake with great wisdom and good sense. And when they had stated the case with a good deal of care and elaboration, he gratified what might be termed his social cabinet of the parish, or what might with propriety be entitled the select-women of the town (to offset the select-men of the town) by saying that they had shown a commendable spirit of oversight and fidelity, and he should profit by their coming; a reply which they construed as equivalent to a pledge on his part.

When sickness came to the children, and Anne Hardy volunteered to nurse them, the cabinet of select-women was incapacitated for service. The members were compelled to stay in their respective homes on account of fever. But rumors of the state of things in the minister's family reached them, and they were correspondingly disturbed. On the first day of general conva-

lescence, these women met by a sort of attraction of moral or social gravitation. They discussed the case with remarkable clearness and spirit, when one considers the prevailing condition of languor, misery, and indifference peculiar to the fever and the season. And it was voted to pay the minister another visit, and set the case before him with freer speech and in more vivid colors.

But this conclusion was, so to speak, laid upon the table, when one of the company referred to rumors in respect to Lady Stanley. Fever, mosquitoes, blight were for the moment forgotten, in the interest excited by the latest reports in respect to the emigrant widow. And the meeting actually broke up in confusion on account of the diversity of opinions expressed concerning this fresh phase of difficulty and obligation presented to them. For while they grew heated in discussion, there moved across the sky black, threatening clouds. The deep, heavy roll of thunder interrupted the conversation. There was a hasty departure for home, and the course of future procedure was left in unsettled state.

Meanwhile Master Johnes was distracted in mind, and oppressed in spirit. The discussion between Lady Stanley and Roger Ludlow had increased his unrest and trouble. For it was evident to him that the governor's friendship had been forfeited by the Stanley family.

The motives involved were beyond his vision. He tried to explain to himself the change which

he observed. It seemed to him that some great storm was gathering above the town, and that when it broke, havoc would gather into its clutches the entire community.

"Yes," said the parson to himself, "we must appoint a day of fasting and prayer. I will consult with the deacons and the committeemen." So the day was appointed, and preparations for its strict observance made.

In his announcement of the fast, Master Johnes referred to their sad and sinking circumstances, the frosts that had destroyed the corn and grain, the pests that had driven them almost to desperation, the malignant epidemic which had raged, and the cruel evidences of Satan's enmity.

On the Wednesday named the meeting-house was filled with an anxious, careworn, wretched people. They seemed in such pitiful contrast to the sweet and songful June morning that it was difficult to harmonize the two. Pale, weak, disconsolate, humiliated, the worshippers entered into the exercises with intense earnestness. And Master Johnes spake with almost unparalleled solemnity. It was hard for the people to restrain their emotions. They were in that condition of susceptibility that one could play upon them as David played upon his harp. Yet their emotions were restrained, and the tense feeling simply manifested itself in an unguarded moment when the eye was moist or the cheek flushed, or the breathing became labored.

Ere the services ended, it seemed that some outlet to their pent-up spirits must be given, or there would come an extraordinary break. For the final words concerned the presence and cruelty of Satan. The need of fasting and prayer was never greater since the great enemy of mankind had manifested special spite against Paradise. Brief reference was made to various personal annoyances which had been ascribed to Satan. Under the forceful instructions of Roger Ludlow, Master Johnes had come to believe that much of the spring's disaster was the result of the black art. It was therefore incumbent upon him to warn the people, and to insist that they implore the Divine help while passing through these trials. The gloom and blackness of the hour was fittingly symbolized by a sudden gathering of thunder-clouds, and an exit from the meeting-house amid the loud discharge of heaven's artillery.

Sapphira and her mother emerged at the same moment. They were surrounded by the weary and excited throng. Whether it was the sultriness which had stolen into the air, or the nervous strain of the long fast service, or the subtle enchantment of an evil eye, it is impossible to say; but just at this moment Sapphira dropped to the ground in front of the meeting-house, right under the feet of the people; piercing cries rent the air, her arms and legs became rigid, and then she swooned away. "What ails the child?" ex-

claimed the multitude with common voice, as the people swayed back and forth in the tumult and crowded close to the little breathing-space that had been made for her.

"Methinks I know these symptoms!" exclaimed Roger Ludlow. "The child is bewitched!" A look of horror passed across the faces of the people. They did not heed the big rain-drops that began to fall upon them. They were oblivious to the sharp play of lightning in the heavens. Mrs. Gold and Mrs. Burr kneeled down by the strange sufferer and unfastened her clothes, and while they were attempting some sympathetic ministrations Master Johnes hastened to their side and offered such counsel as he was able to give.

It was only a moment that the principal actors in the little drama were distributed in this way. For the Widow Hardy, who had stood like one living in another realm during the commotion, apparently oblivious to Sapphira's fit—her eyes fixed on the clouds and her lips muttering unintelligible words—suddenly became aware that something had happened to her child, and that people were regarding her with hateful curiosity. She turned her eyes upon the small group which made the center of commotion, and then for the first time saw that Sapphira was lying on the ground, surrounded by frightened people, who were trying to bring her back to consciousness. As she stepped toward her, the child opened her eyes, and when they became fixed upon the

mother, there was another succession of cries, moans, contortions, followed by unconsciousness.

The gaze of Anne Hardy appeared to aggravate the fit. Rain was now falling in sheets. Everybody was drenched to the skin. Sapphira had again revived. Anne Hardy stood for a moment beneath one of the large trees which had been left on the edge of the Green when the land was cleared for military evolutions, and near her stood Lady Stanley. The darkness was like to that of evening. Winds shook the ghostly foliage with a sort of fury. The violence of the rain increased. Then a sharp, vivid, swordlike stroke of lightning darted into the midst of the multitude, riving the tree asunder, shedding a baleful evanescent light upon the awful scene, printing indelibly upon the memory of the people a picture of the terror-stricken Sapphira, looking with inexpressible fear upon the twisted, ghastly face of her mother, and pointing with her finger toward the falling elm, or Widow Hardy, or the Lady Stanley. The shrieks, groans, exclamations of men, women, and children, mingled with the wild tumult of nature, made it a moment of nameless horror. If this was not a demonstration of the Black Man's awful power and accursed presence, what was?

An instant and speedy scattering of the multitude followed. The tormented child was hurried across the Green to the minister's house, accompanied by Master Johnes, Lady Stanley, Mrs.

Gold, Anne Hardy, and two or three other neighbors. A portion of the people fled back into the meeting-house. The majority hastened to their homes.

The impression was wellnigh universal that the storm itself had been summoned through the wizard work of a witch among them, and the criminal was indicated, according to the accepted opinion, when Sapphira pointed to her own mother, although it was intimated on the part of various observers that Lady Stanley was the person signified. A few moderate and skeptical witnesses asserted that Sapphira simply had the thunderbolt and the shattered tree in mind, when her eyes and fingers pointed in that direction.

XIV

The Select-women Advise the Parson to Marry

There was great excitement in Paradise. The fast-day episode was far more significant and distressing than the hysterical interruption at the Thanksgiving service. And many stories were told in respect to the scene which followed in the home of Master Johnes.

Some reported that Sapphira swooned every time that her mother looked at her or touched her on that occasion, so that the minister was obliged to send the woman home, and keep the child under his own charge. Others said that she vomited bent pins and contined to cry that she was tormented, until Lady Stanley left the house after the storm had subsided. There was also strange talk in respect to a quarrel between Widow Hardy and the Lady Stanley. It was said that Anne Hardy called Lady Stanley a witch, and accused her of tormenting her child. And the accused lady had replied that there was no such thing as witchcraft. Sapphira was nervous, hysterical, frightened. To this remark Widow Hardy had replied by calling the Lady

Stanley a bad woman, charging her with a grave crime against her womanhood. Then it was said that the Lady Stanley fainted away; Widow Hardy screamed and cried worse than even Sapphira did; the children in the house grew wild almost to distraction, and Master Johnes was beside himself with sorrow, perplexity, and despair. If ever Bedlam was let loose in Paradise, it was on the afternoon of fast-day in the home of the minister, according to the popular version of the scene.

It is certain that there was a great commotion within the walls of the parsonage on that particular day, but the details of it were never given to the public. Widow Hardy did go to her house without Sapphira, but as the child often tarried at the minister's, it was not strange for her to remain on this occasion. And Lady Stanley departed from the parsonage when the storm passed, bearing the stamp of suffering upon her countenance—a picture of wretchedness and anguish. But this might have been explained by the recent illness and fever which had afflicted her, or by the late scene before the meeting-house.

The town was moved as never before in its history. For people believed that the various evils and disturbances which afflicted them resulted through the machinations of malicious spirits in league with the Devil. The children were now afraid to walk upon the streets in the twilight, or to play upon the Green late in the afternoon.

The witches might catch them and carry them away. Men and women were timid in respect to stepping forth into the darkness. They had been slapped by unseen hands. They were pinched, and tripped, and lashed. Their garments were actually taken from off their bodies. All sorts of scurvy tricks were played upon them. Men said they did not mind a wolf, or a bear, or even a panther, for one had the satisfaction of meeting such a foe face to face. Men said that they were not especially afraid of the rattlesnakes which infested the forests that skirted the settlement. But they objected to fighting with uncanny and invisible foes. They were cowards in the presence of the black art. So their fear naturally infected the neighborhood.

But it was not alone a question of meeting such foes and submitting to their annoyances. This one phase of the trouble was enough to explain the prevalent unrest and terror. It was also a question of pounds, pence, and shillings. And the financial phase of the witchcraft disturbance was quite as important and noteworthy.

If a woman who had sold herself to the Devil, and received in exchange for such price the power to kill herds, blight trees, summon storms in haying time, throw ships upon the rocks and various other things, to the injury of business, and commerce, and labor, continued to exercise such infernal powers, and thus harass and destroy her neighbors, or curse the community, then it was

clear that the means to stop such practices must be taken. Viewed in this light witchcraft was just as much a crime as theft or arson. What was the difference between applying a torch to a haystack or a barn, or summoning the lightning to fire them? Was not the person who did either thing guilty of an incendiary act?

Or to state it in terms that made most forcible appeal to the Paradisians on this particular year, would not the law punish a person that took the life of his neighbor and destroyed his property? Now had not the whole community been grievously afflicted this spring and summer? Had not a large amount of property been destroyed? Did not the fever rage for weeks upon weeks, and were there not many new graves in the burying-ground testifying to the havoc of disease?

These things were manifestly the results of witchcraft. It is true that there were people who ascribed them to other causes. But Roger Lud-.low was dogmatic and assertive on the subject Communications with Hartford and Boston had strengthened the conviction. The latest news from Europe related various incidents in the life of witches. And every day some Indian visitor talked with the people on the subject, shook his head with wise look, told them of the wild work done by sorcery among the tribes, and encouraged them to a belief in the dreadful creed.

There seemed good reason, therefore, for the excitement which prevailed through Paradise.

It was felt that something must be done to rid the community of such evil doings. And now that the evidences were overwhelming in respect to the presence of witch-work among them, the thing for the people to do was to find the witch, and proceed according to law in their treatment of the individual. There was absolutely no taint of spite or cruelty on the part of the vast majority of citizens who believed in witchcraft. It was a case of self-defence, a movement in behalf of good morals, an effort to conduct the affairs of the town in a creditable and prosperous way.

Among the reports circulated at the time, one concerned Master Johnes and his relations with the two widows.

The committee of select-women gathered on the day following the fast services, and discussed their course of action. It was whispered among them that the parson himself was bewitched, and these good women desired to break the spell of any enchantment which might perchance have been directed his way.

It was frankly said on various occasions at this time that Widow Hardy had really sold herself to the Evil One. So that the self-constituted committee of watch-care, having in charge their ward the minister, discussed in open meeting as it were the fact that this woman exercised her charms upon Master Johnes.

Then it had been learned, through that wise and gentle pressure which such people bring to

bear upon little children, that Anne Hardy had actually put strange compounds into the minister's food during the days of the children's sickness. The watchful Indian servant had told Esther in confidence, and Esther had naturally repeated the important information confidentially to the interested women of the parish, and these latter individuals disseminated the information, after a confidential way, throughout the community.

It was decided to visit Master Johnes again, and recommend to him immediate marriage with a most estimable and eligible widow, popular in the settlement, well circumstanced in this world's goods, a very proper individual for a minister's wife. For it is to be inferred that a companion for the parson was necessarily a person in whom everybody was interested. What more natural than that the community should therefore be consulted? In this case it was believed that the chosen and favored woman would prove a good antidote to any charms or bewitchments, exercised by Widow Hardy or other ally of the Black Man. And it was deemed that such a course would be the swiftest and most satisfactorily method of exorcism for the parsonage.

A parson's wife belonged to the whole parish during this period of New England history. She must be a capable woman, and yet not too capable, for in this latter case she made her sisters feel uncomfortable, and this condition of things did not conduce to the peace of the community.

Had there been no other objections to Widow Hardy, her very neatness would have been a barrier. A minister's house ought to be well kept; but when it is so well kept that it contrasts with other households to their marked discredit, it comes to be a thorn in the flesh, and certain people are not pleased. Now the worthy woman suggested to Master Johnes struck the happy medium between slackness and neatness.

Then the minister's wife must not be too smart; neither must she be deficient in intelligence. Parishioners did not like to feel their inferiority or have it thrust persistently in their faces; and they did not like to feel that this important individual was beneath them in intellectual calibre, since in that case she was not a fit companion for the minister.

His wife must also be a social woman, and yet not too social. She must know how to make herself agreeable to all classes and adapt herself to all conditions, and at the same time she must not talk so freely that her husband's private habits became town-talk and his personal likes and dislikes were known to man, woman, and child through her careless, ill-judged speech. Anne Hardy was too smart, too sharp-tongued, too intellectual, too independent. And Lady Stanley was too high up in the world, too sweetly courteous, not sufficiently practical, and not thoroughly in harmony with her environment.

It was the universal feeling that Master

Johnes should have a woman that would make a nice, comfortable home for him, one that was well known and acceptable to everybody—a fair manager of affairs, discreet and motherly in the community, a woman that never dressed better than her neighbors, and was careful not to intermeddle with the affairs of the town or parish. The select-women had just such an individual to recommend. It is true that the person in mind had buried three husbands. But this was a thing in her favor, for they had all died happy, and she had profited by the discipline incident to adapting herself to three diverse temperaments. It was true also that she was marked with a few minor infirmities, like blindness in one eye, a loss of the sense of smell, a disregard for dress. She was likewise a plain and angular person, devoid of sentiment or imagination. But she was a good woman—not so good that she would be oppressive and censorious to the sisters of the parish, but just good enough to diffuse a quiet, agreeable home atmosphere through the parsonage.

But it was a delicate task to consummate this union. For Master Johnes himself might have something to say on the subject that had not occurred to them. He might even have chosen a companion anterior to their visit, or independent of their suggestions. Nevertheless duty spurred them on to the task and sustained them through the arduous experience.

There was the usual exchange of compliments or courtesies when they entered the parsonage. There were seven of the committee seated in various parts of the parlor, the chairs being pushed stiffly back against the wall, two on each side of the room, the large bed standing in the middle. Master Johnes placed himself opposite the head of the bed, while Mrs. Ludlow took her station on the other side of this conspicuous object.

"We have come," observed the governor's wife, "to discourse with you concerning affairs of great moment." Now the committee had decided not to mention the names of Widow Hardy or Lady Stanley, in case it was possible to avoid it. They proposed to attain their object by indirection. For their object was not so much to marry Master Johnes to the woman of their choice, as it was to keep him from marrying the woman that was not their choice.

"It is kind of you to think of me in these hard and distressful times," replied the parson.

"Reverend friend," continued Mrs. Ludlow, "we compassionate you in your loneliness, and we long to see a companion ease the burdens of your life, and minister to your daily necessities."

"Life hath many burdens, but we are permitted to cast them all on the Lord. My heart is sore troubled for our people. I fear me that grievous days are upon us. My constant prayer is for guidance and strength."

"We believe it," said another of the committee-women, "and we are fain to give you the benefit of our sisterly counsel."

"I thank you for such tender solicitude. Well do I know the worth of counsel given in the goodness of your heart for the help of your harassed pastor. But my mind hath been filled with the concerns of the town, so that I have quite forgotten my own private needs. When brighter days come and the storm which broods above us shall pass away, it will be time to think upon John and Esther and other family relations."

"Master Johnes, the Scripture saith that it is not good to be alone."

"True, and thank God, I am never alone! There is One to give me companionship who never tires and always strengthens me."

"Yes, good sir, but we are taught that a bishop should be the husband of one wife."

"Many years was I blessed with such association," observed the minister with becoming sadness, "and——"

"Don't you see, Master Johnes, they want you to marry some one *now!*" The words seemed to come from beneath the bed, and the voice was certainly the voice of Sapphira Hardy. A sudden shock was communicated to the company, and everybody looked about them in search of the hidden eavesdropper. Master Johnes arose from his chair.

"You needn't marry on Esther's account.

She'll soon be old enough to take care of herself and you too," continued the unseen interloper. Then Master Johnes took two steps toward the bed, peering down toward the valances, and yet hesitating to stoop and look underneath it. It did not comport with the dignity of a minister whose height was more than six feet, and whose weight was above two hundred pounds, to bend his large bulk into such attitude as was necessary to lift the curtain and examine the obscure precincts, while the interested and astonished gaze of fourteen eyes was fixed upon him. He trembled at the thought, and finally drew back, smitten with boyish fright.

It was a hot day, late in the month, and Master Johnes had begun his haying. When the seven devoted counsellors called upon him, he had just come from the hayfield. Hurriedly he had garbed himself in a full-skirted coat of tawny cloth and adjusted his neckgear according to the mode of the day; but his garments had been put on with such haste that he did not feel quite sure as to their general good appearance or their staying qualities. Something might slip and give way did he bend forward and put any strain upon this or that particular portion of his apparel. The thought of any such catastrophe made the blood mount to his pale cheeks, and gave his face a fresh look of diffidence and modesty most interesting to his visitors. So Master Johnes remained in his embarrassing position,

The women did not like to brave the stare of the minister and other onlookers while engaged in any such investigation. To be sure, it would have taken less than five seconds for some of them to step over to that haunted bed, fall gracefully and naturally upon the knees, whisk the valances up on to the luxurious feather mountain covered with a white spread, and push the head far enough into the subterranean regions to discover any culprit that might be lurking in that retired place. But there was not a woman present that had the courage to do it. And when Master Johnes stood awaiting further developments in the case, the visiting committee likewise arose from their respective seats and looked with inquisitive concern into his troubled countenance.

At length it occurred to him that the room was hot and his callers might be pleased to pass into the cool kitchen, where Tituba, his Indian woman, was attending to the domestic affairs of the household. For the large kitchen was cool at this time of the day, and there were things in the room sure to interest housekeepers. Had there been a wife conducting the establishment, Master Johnes would not have ventured to introduce the company with such little ceremony into this most important precinct of the establishment. For a good housekeeper would naturally object to such an inroad and inspection, unless everything had been put in order and the room was made to look

its best. Fortunately Widow Hardy had disentangled the confusion and given Tituba some lessons in cleanliness and good order, so that the room was in better condition than the visitors anticipated. Nevertheless they continued to remind each other of the way Mrs. Johnes, deceased, was accustomed to do, and they kindly suggested various contradictory arrangements to the watchful and disgruntled Tituba.

Meanwhile one of the callers had quietly slipped back into the now deserted parlor and made short work of investigating the regions beneath the bed. This was one of the touches of nature which shows that the whole world is kin. For who was there in that company that didn't long to solve the mystery, and would gladly have hastened to an immediate investigation had not pride and decorum restrained them? Alas, the single investigator saw nothing but the inevitable accumulations of dust and feathers hidden away in the twilight of the spot. And when she joined the other members of the committee it was evident that they had no heart for further discourse upon the marriage of the parson. What committee of seven or even ten women could advise with a minister concerning his marriage, when there was a feeling that eavesdroppers were hidden away in mysterious places, and the conversation might be interrupted at any moment with shocking comments or discourteous questions? So the committee withdrew, after due observa-

tions upon milk, cream, butter, conveniences for domestic services, management of servants, and the various stock topics of conversation which are invaluable to people on these occasions.

Then Master Johnes searched for the children. He knew the voice of Sapphira too well to be deceived in the matter. She had interrupted the flow of talk or broken the thread of conversation, so to speak, and he felt that she must be rebuked for it. Not that he failed to appreciate his escape from an interview that might have been perplexing and disagreeable. But the child must have restraint put upon her, and she must be taught to respect her seniors.

Sapphira had spent a large portion of her days through June with Esther. Master Johnes believed it was better for the child to be separated from her mother. And Anne Hardy was pleased with the arrangement. The fits to which Sapphira was subject never manifested themselves unless her mother was present. Master Johnes therefore concluded that the mother exerted some strange influence over the child. And he was aware that she exercised unhappy influences over other people. Those strong, keen black eyes had a power that was wellnigh irresistible at times. He had felt it on various occasions. And the woman seemed to command forces that were inexplicable to him. He was persuaded that much of the feeling against the Stanleys

was the result of hatred or jealousy on the part of Widow Hardy. Could it be also that this strange woman was in any measure accountable for the harassments and disturbances which had prevailed in the town?

At length Master Johnes discovered Esther and Sapphira hidden away in the garret.

"Why did you annoy the good women that came to see me?" he inquired.

"Because they annoyed you," was the swift reply of the child, who did not think of denying the fact. Master Johnes was the one person that she loved with whole heart and mind.

"But, Sapphira, it was a naughty, disagreeable think to do. Were you under the bed?"

"Oh, no! we just crept under the feather bolster, and we faced under the bed. When I saw 'em coming I knew what they wanted. So I told Esther we'd hide and hear."

"But I cannot have you doing such pranks and teaching Esther such wrong things, Sapphira. I shall have to send you home if you don't do right."

"Oh, please, Master Johnes, let me stay! I just thought I would help you. I knew you didn't like what they said. I couldn't keep still. But I won't do it again!" The child was really penitent. She had rendered Master Johnes a kind of service. Could he say aught further by way of rebuke?

"Well, Sapphira, you may stay," he said.

"But never interfere with things that do not concern you again." And then the minister returned to the hay-field, and the children went into the kitchen to discuss the visitation with Tituba.

XV

The Widow Hardy is Accused of Familiarity with Satan

July was a month of storms. The lush grass was cut, but the sun did not have an opportunity to cure it, so great quantities went to waste. The fever had abated, but the mosquitoes increased in their malignity. It was a season of bitter experience and sorrowful memories.

Fresh annoyances came to the Stanley family. Voices sounded in different parts of their house at night. Sometimes it was a moan or a cry; then it was discordant laughter. Several times there was a gruff command, bidding them leave the country.

When Lady Stanley appeared upon the street she was greeted with marked coolness on the part of neighbors. Twice when walking alone on the edge of the forest she had been insulted by invisible foes, who called her hard names. And once her very cloak had been taken from her while walking at twilight in the cool sea air.

Master Johnes came often to the house and sympathized with the family. The annoyances became so constant and disagreeable that Mr.

Stanley at last decided to return to England or go to the Continent. When this decision was reported, these inexplicable visitations decreased in frequency and virulence. But Master Johnes was depressed and troubled more than ever. His condition was such that he invited four of the neighboring ministers to spend the day with him and engage in fasting and prayer. This gave him an opportunity to counsel with his godly co-laborers, and receive their helpful encouragements. But they had nothing to suggest by way of immediate action or procedure.

Roger Ludlow was the man who took the initiative in the movement for the extermination of witchcraft.

It occurred the thirteenth of July. Four complainants swore out a warrant against Anne Hardy. On this eventful morning the town magistrate, escorted by the marshal, the constables and their aids, passed down the street to the Green, and solemnly entered the meeting-house. The woman was in the custody of the officers. There had been a slight commotion when the warrant was served; for Anne Hardy had been surprised and angered. The representatives of the law had entered her house with dirty feet, and ere they disclosed to her the object of their coming she had seized a small shovel conveniently at hand, and belabored two of them to such effect that they long carried the marks of their reception. When this first ebullition of feeling was passed, they

proceeded with proper caution and deference in the matter, so that the woman was finally prevailed upon to accompany them to the meeting-house, where the examination was to take place. The word had been quickly passed through the town, and the entire population gathered on the Green or thronged into the meeting-house. An intense, absorbing curiosity was manifested. A feeling of anxiety and terror prevailed. Two magistrates took seats in front of the pulpit, and faced the excited congregation. A long table was placed before them. The officers who executed the warrant brought the prisoner to the seat prepared for her near the table.

Master Johnes had been summoned, and the exercises opened with prayer. The constable then presented Anne Hardy. The magistrate then put his questions.

"Anne Hardy, what evil spirit have you familiarity with?"

There was a moment of breathless silence, when the woman snappishly replied: "My own!"

People breathed and looked astonished, for she spoke in a tone that suggested levity and a failure to appreciate her perilous situation.

"Have you not made a contract with the Devil?"

"Why do you ask me? Go to him if you want to get such evidence? Do you think I would be fool enough to incriminate myself?" There was wit in this answer, although it did not suit the

demands of the case. The magistrate was perplexed and annoyed, while the feelings of observers grew more antagonistic.

"What makes your child Sapphira have fits?" he continued with severity.

"That is a question, sir, which I would like to have you answer *me*. I should feel under obligations to you." Now this seemed positively wicked to the people. The tone of her answers and the whole spirit of her action prejudiced the hearers. She showed no respect. She appeared fearless and quite at ease. The examination was continued.

"Have you not had in your house a book on the Black Art?"

"And what if I have?" she replied. "I'm not the only one in this town that has read such books." Which was quite true, for Master Johnes knew that Roger Ludlow had possessed one and read it with great care.

"What has become of that book?" continued the questioner.

"I have been curious to learn that thing myself," observed Anne Hardy. "It has been lost these two months. Perhaps some of our townspeople have got it, and will now be pleased to return it to the owner."

"Anne Hardy, have you made no contract with the Devil?"

"I am not in the contract business," said the woman. "Had I made such a contract I should

feel compelled to respect it and not betray the confidence of the individual to which you refer."

"But you don't deny it?"

No answer was given.

"What means have you used to torment this settlement?"

Every ear was alert to catch any word of revelation.

"Do you refer to my children? I know they are a constant torment to me. I suppose they torment the settlement likewise." And as this remark was made there appeared the first signs of emotion.

"Anne Hardy, have you not been about the settlement in the night, and have you not frightened people by appearing unto them at their windows and making strange noises?"

"I have visited sick folks by night," was the evasive reply.

"Will you deny that you have been in league with the Evil One and that you have done much mischief?"

"Who says it?" exclaimed the accused woman.

"What creature do you employ in this work?" continued the magistrate. For it was currently reported that she had sometimes used the form of a cat and at other times had taken the form of a bird. People remembered how a black cat had come down the chimney of the parsonage before the sickness and death of Mrs. Johnes. It had also been reported that a black cat had appeared

to Lady Stanley shortly after the family was settled in their house. But this question put by the magistrate was likewise unanswered.

"What did you mutter after the fast-day meeting, as you stood before the door of the meeting-house and the lightning struck the elm?"

"The Lord only knows," said Widow Hardy with something akin to amusement in her tone.

"Woman, do you not know that the Devil is the great enemy of mankind?"

"Methinks," cried the accused, "that I have read somewhere how every man is his own worst enemy. And I suppose woman too. Why do you assail me? Have I not troubles enough of my own to bear?" And she dashed a tear from her eye.

"Anne Hardy, do you believe that Satan appears to men and consorts with them?" The question was stated amid a stillness that was oppressive. The woman moved nervously, changing her position from one foot to another, bent her head forward as if in deep reflection, then replied just above a whisper:

"Yes."

There was a perceptible commotion among the onlookers, as much as to say, "She knows this thing from experience."

"Can you repeat the Lord's Prayer?" was the next question. And the woman shook her head, intimating that either she could not or she would not. And this concluded the examination. It

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"Can you repeat the Lord's Prayer?" was the next question. And the woman shook her head, intimating that either she could not or she would not. And this concluded the examination. It

was a foregone conclusion that the accused would be committed for trial.

Paradise had been famed for its peace and good order, so that the inhabitants had not built a jail. The pillory and the stocks and the whipping-post had served the necessary purposes of restraint, intimidation, or punishment. The ordinary cases of discipline concerned drunken Indians, an occasional breach of the peace on the part of some mischievous boy, the inroad of some neighboring trespasser, or annoyances incident to the small fishing and boating interests of the town. It was therefore decided to set a guard over Anne Hardy in her own house until the meeting of "Corte." Ananias and Sapphira were taken from her and put in the charge of Master Johnes. So the woman was left to spend her days in quiet, and opportunity was given her for proper meditation and the planning any line of defence which she might invent.

During the weeks that the Widow Hardy was confined to the precincts of her home, the voices which had annoyed the Stanley family did not haunt them. Neither did the mysterious assaults and interruptions of the past months continue. This fact was construed as evidence that the accused had really been the active agent in these things.

Yet people were by no means prepared to say that the Black Man had intermitted his persecutions. For cattle continued to die. The season

was still an unprecedentedly wet season, so that vegetables rotted in the ground and the little fruit that was trying to get to maturity swelled and fell to the earth. The night winds and rains were frightful in their violence. And many a person asserted that the air seemed filled with witches riding hither and thither on their errands of cruelty and wickedness. Shouts, laughter, conversation, demoniac frenzy, wild ribaldry, tumultuous riotings,—all were heard distinctly, and various witnesses stood ready to testify unto these things. In fact, the proceedings against Anne Hardy were thought to have aggravated the activities of the Black Man. There was nothing out of the ordinary course in the life of the settlement during these weeks which was not attributed to witchcraft.

Early one morning Master Johnes repaired to the beach for prayer and meditation. He had spent a sleepless night and had risen before the August sun. There was a sweet, cool, grateful breeze blowing on the shore, and the fellowship of the sea promised some kind of relief to his perturbed and anxious mind.

There is something infinitely restful and uplifting in association with the ocean when the mood is favorable. A great storm absorbs a man's wild, tempestuous energies, and induces comparative relief. The monotonous break of the tide upon the shore soothes the distracted spirit. Its very tone of subdued and fitful melancholy woos one

into gentler thoughts and sweeter self-communings. The vast stretch of waters with perpetual variations speaks to the individual concerning his own inconspicuous and unimportant personality, so that he comes to see how he exaggerates his difficulties, and at length is taught to let go his hold upon many petty things which vex him. Happy is the man who has made the sea his friend,—who can go to it with his trials, sorrows, failures, disappointments, aspirations, necessities, and there hearken to its wise and sympathetic speech, attend humbly and believingly unto its gracious and tender ministries.

The sky was sheened with silver and the water cast up its faint, serious reflection when Master Johnes reached the shore. He walked with slow, calm step by the water's side, forgetful of the swelling tide. The heavens reddened with the on-coming, wide-spreading light, and still the absorbed man paced his slow march along the shore. The sun pushed a swift way out of the sea like some anomalous, vivid monster unknown to the books of science. The waters were flooded with splendor, and the full day was ushered into being with indescribable accompaniment of manifold glory.

These beautiful influences of nature wrought unconscious effects within the soul of the distressed man. He must pray. So he stood a solitary, motionless figure against the morning horizon, his arms clasped in an agony of entreaty, his

eyes closed to the beauties of the memorable scene about him, yet opened to the unseen, holy presence of God. The voice of his supplication mingled with the worship of nature. For nature was vocal. Gentle winds, the song of birds, music of waves, rustling marsh-grasses, happy awaking of life for the day—these things all served as quaint, suggestive background of orchestral setting. And Master Johnes prayed.

"O Thou that leddest Israel like a flock, lead Thou this Israel into the rest of Canaan.

"Remember us in the sore afflictions with which we are stricken, and stay the persecutions aimed against us.

"Didst Thou not visit Thy people with favor when they chose this land for their earthly Canaan? And wilt thou not continue with us in the joy and comfort of Thy Providence?

"Are we touched by the cruel hand of the Prince of Darkness like Thy servant Job?—teach us patience, meekness, endurance, and grant to Thy people a persevering faith that shall triumph over the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

"Thou knowest the darkness of this hour and the bitterness of the soul. Save us from our sins and perfect us in Thy righteousness.

"Deliver us, O God, from the awful scourge which makes us to bow in misery and terror this day. Lead us to a knowledge of the truth, and keep us from the curse and iniquity of wrong judgment.

"Didst Thou not give Israel the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night? Didst Thou not reveal Thyself in the Shekinah? And we long for Thy guidance and illumination, Thy spirit of correction and instruction, the help which shall enable us to avoid works of error, ignorance, and darkness, and do the things which make for peace and godliness in our town and colony.

"Give to Thy tempted and straying children a better mind, we beseech Thee. Bring them into the light and preserve their souls.

"Almighty God, visit Thy darkened, troubled servant who hath been charged with a great crime. Show her the way of life, forgive her all sin and error as she repenteth and seeketh peace.

"Grant that our beloved land may escape the condemnation and horror of the Devil's work. May witchcraft be withstood and driven from our borders. Teach all our people to abhor the evil and cleave to the good.

"May we regard with infinite concern the salvation of Thy people. And may we be led into the full knowledge of the truth.

"O God, we are in great extremity. The peace of the town is disturbed. The Enemy of souls goeth about among us. Come with almighty power and succor us from the destruction of the Adversary."

Master Johnes had yielded himself so completely to the spirit of prayer that he was oblivious to

his surroundings. He did not see that clouds had swiftly gathered and obscured the glory of sunshine. He had not caught any moaning of the storm-wind or observed that the waves had lifted their voices into a harsh, discordant key. He even failed to realize the fact that the tide had pushed itself against his feet, and that in his unconscious yielding to its pressure he had stepped farther into the waters rather than receded to a place of safety.

It was only when there sounded a shrill, rough note of tempest, and there was dashed into his upturned face the angry spray of a big white-capped wave, that he became conscious of his position. But there he stood, knee-deep in the sea, hands still clasped in prayer, gloom settling down upon him, his face written over with sharp lines of agony, the voice trembling with an earnestness and intensity of emotion in perfect accord with the rising winds and waters. Did it not seem like a parable of nature?—the fresh and beautiful morning overtaken by the storm-king,—the glad new life in Paradise begloomed and overridden by the Prince of the Powers of the Air?

But the prayer was simply interrupted. The distressed and anguishful minister stepped back upon the beach, and, yielding himself to early habit, fell humbly upon his knees, and in this posture continued his supplications. What mattered it to him that the rain began to fall and that he seemed to have gone back into the night from

which he came an hour ago? What mattered it to him that nature had given herself to such riot that his very words were indistinguishable to his own ears, swallowed up in the blare of ocean trumpets and the medley of furious sounds? His people were in imminent peril. Souls might sell themselves to the Devil. The evidences of sorcery and bewitchment were already forthcoming. Adversity was pinching the community. Peace and joy in the Lord were grievously interrupted. Hope had gone down behind the clouds. Who had the power to predict the end?

Long was the good man upon his knees. And when he rose and opened his eyes the face of nature had undergone another change. That fresh and radiant beauty which had first printed itself upon his mind as he stood by the sea that morning was all returned with indefinable enhancement. The storm had passed. The marsh-grasses were shaking the rain-drops in the air, shooting their thousand iridescent hues in all directions; the waves shimmered and glistened under another baptism of morning light; there was the note of birds and the cheerful hum of myriad insect life; nature was purified; the air became fresh-laden with the season's fragrance, and joy brooded above the landscape. And it came to Master Johnes as another and brighter prophecy or parable of the things which God had in store for him and his people.

XVI

On Trial for Witchcraft

The duties of the pastoral office are necessarily arduous and exacting. But Master Johnes and his brother ministers were burdened beyond the usual conventions characteristic of a religious society or institution. The parsons of the New England colonies were the important and conspicuous members of the community. They generally assumed the lead in public affairs, although such leadership might be skilfully hidden behind the activity of the magistrates. There was not much achieved in the progress or history of the young commonwealths that did not find its inception in the minister's brain or receive its impulse from the minister's spirit.

Great and varied responsibilities therefore bore down heavily upon Master Johnes, although the town had as founder and inspiration such a gifted and eminent man as Roger Ludlow. John Cotton in Boston was a sort of model for the various parsons scattered through the colonies. It was not only that what he said in respect to both church and state became law, but it was also that his example of dealing with all subjects and

concerning himself with all affairs was followed with greater or less strictness by brethren in the ministry.

Such oversight and activity when discreetly exercised required little less than what approximated to a kind of human omniscience. And Master Johnes was among the men who exercised his gifts in all the ways which custom outlined for the minister.

He was a most faithful shepherd of the flock, diligent in every phase of pastoral service. He likewise attended to such bodily ailments as were called to his notice. He sought earnestly to settle all trivial difficulties which arose among neighbors. When the town had a "meeting for the attentions of the town's occasions" on Wednesdays after lecture in the little rude meeting-house, he was invariably present to open the session with prayer and take his important part in the discussion of business. It might be the management of the school, or the laying out of a new road; the appointment of a man to the care of the sheep or the cattle pastured in the distant common lots, or a selection of men to decide a boundary line. Whatever the business, the Reverend Master Johnes was consulted, his opinion taken, and due regard paid to his suggestions. It was his duty to explain the relations between the English and the Dutch at this time when these relations were strained. On several lecture days he considered the attitude of the people who made New Nether-

lands their home, and advised his own people in respect to war.

The parson in Paradise conducted himself with singular wisdom and charity through all these experiences. But when it came to the consideration of the supernatural and his treatment of the witchcraft case before him, he was agitated with fears and doubts. He believed in the reality of the crime, yet he was sadly perplexed in respect to Goody Hardy. Repeatedly he visited her when she was confined in the extemporised prison. The woman puzzled him beyond conception. There were times when she appeared calm, rational, womanly. At other times she seemed bereft of all reason, and spake with a freedom and a frenzy which suggested that she might be possessed of the Devil.

As the day drew nigh when she was to be tried, she seemed to live more and more in a dream realm or in a state of mind which bordered on insanity. She never asked for her children. When they were mentioned she sometimes referred to them as better circumstanced than when she had them with her. She manifested little interest in her neighbors, apparently caring naught in respect to the issue of the trial. Two individuals alone engrossed her mind.

In the presence of the minister she was her best self. Happy the person who has the power to foster the nobler phases of human nature. Happy the minister whose special gift it is to teach his

people how richly endowed they are with high, fine qualities of heart or mind, and so to encourage them in their use that life becomes infinitely beautiful and fruitful for them in all the things that are most precious and enduring.

In his interviews with the woman she generally bore herself with such dignity and resignation that Master Johnes actually hoped for her acquittal. Lady Stanley encouraged him in such thought and prayer. For she continued to insist that it was all a delusion,—a thing, however, which the prisoner strangely and perversely denied. The Widow Hardy was frank to state her belief in witchcraft even while her life hung in the balance and she might be compelled to suffer like a common criminal upon the gibbet.

On one occasion Lady Stanley visited the accused. But she did not repeat the call. Various stories concerning the interview were current, but all agreed that it was a violent and shocking scene. In the goodness of her soul this would-be friend had come to manifest her sympathy and declare her utter disbelief in the charge. This was certainly a noble and commendable action. For it was common talk that Widow Hardy had grossly abused this true gentlewoman on more than one occasion. And it was now believed that many of the annoyances to which the Stanleys had been subjected had their source in the hatred of Goody Hardy. However it might be, the prisoner drove her visitor from the house, not only rejecting her

sympathy, but actually reviling her and working herself up to a frenzy of personal violence. This was one of the instances when the jailers declared that the evidences were convincing beyond a peradventure. The speech, the action, the spirit all went to prove that the woman was a witch. But Lady Stanley made the simple remark that the poor creature was unbalanced.

Many were the talks which Master Johnes had with Lady Stanley upon the particular case before them and the general theme of witchcraft. It was the influence of these conversations which cropped out in his discussions with Roger Ludlow. While the minister felt compelled to credit the evidences forthcoming in respect to witches in general, he hesitated and wavered when it came to this special case in Paradise. So the weeks sped away, and the day for the meeting of "Corte" was upon them.

It was one of the great and memorable occasions in the history of Paradise. The Governor, the Deputy-Governor, and five assistants came down from Hartford and composed the "Corte." Its sessions were held in the meeting-house. On the first morning of the trial the town manifested a liveliness and excitement equalled only by that seen on the day of the arrest. The streets were filled with people, for the interest was so keen that labor was suspended and everybody gravitated toward the Green.

The meeting-house was thronged, and the build-

ing itself was framed by a surging mass of humanity which found it impossible to get within the small compass of the structure. The seven men composing the "Corte" sat in front of the pulpit and made a most solemn and dignified appearance. The accused was separated from the people by a temporary arrangement of chairs and tables. A prayer was offered by the minister. Then the strange work to be done by this body of worthy men was begun.

The indictment read as follows:

"A bill exhibited against Anne Hardy, widow of Jeremiah Hardy, of Paradise, in the county of Paradise, in the colony of Connecticut.

"Anne Hardy, widow of Jeremiah Hardy, of Paradise, thou art here indicted by the name of Anne Hardy, that not having the fear of God before thine eyes, thou hast had familiarity with Satan, the grand enemy of God and man, and that by his instigation and help thou hast in a preternatural way afflicted and done harm to the bodyes and estates of sundry people, or to some of them, contrary to the peace of the colony. . . . For which, by the laws of God and this colony thou deservest to die."

Fifty witnesses were examined. The evidence was voluminous, so that several days were required for the taking of it.

Witness Number One testified that she had frequently seen her walking down the street talking evidently to his Satanic Majesty, for her lips

moved, occasional words were heard, she made strange gesticulations, and yet there was no person visible holding conversation with her.

Witness Number Two said that she had heard her say: "The Devil take this, and the Devil take that." She was convinced that the Black Man had taken her at her word, and so had taken her into his service.

Witness Number Three swore that on Fast Day, when the people came out of meeting, he saw Goody Hardy look up into the clouds, lift her hands and make magical signs, then stamp her feet and utter some unintelligible words; and then the storm broke, and the lightning struck the oak on the edge of the Green.

Witness Number Four asserted that she met her in the street, and Goody Hardy exclaimed, "Your pocket is full of figs," although the figs did not show themselves and the pocket itself was out of sight.

Witness Number Five testified that an Indian brought the accused two little things, "brighter than the light of day," heathen gods; and she knew that the Indian told her that "if she would keep them she would be so big rich, all one god." And she did keep them.

One witness described her uncontrollable temper, narrating various incidents which went to show that she possessed superhuman strength and exercised it on various extraordinary occasions.

Another witness spoke of her secret wanderings by night, telling how she had observed her pass into the forest at dusk and disappear amid the gloom of the trees, and how she had been seen to return several times at a late hour of the night. This testimony was interrupted by wild laughter which seemed to proceed from the roof of the meeting-house. Everybody gazed upward. The officers moved hastily about them, seeking for such bold disturber of the peace. But the people present were not only sober—an expression of alarm was manifest.

One witness assured the "Corte" that the accused had been whisked through the air on a broomstick. Not that he had seen the broomstick, but he had heard the swish of it many a night when the winds were high, and her voice was distinctly audible above the din and roar of the storm. This testimony was given with such conviction that it produced a great impression upon the "Corte."

The next witness asserted that she had been taken with several "swonding fits" during the spring, and she believed that Goody Hardy was the cause of them, for the woman had long shown special spite for her. This testimony was interrupted by the same voice which had apparently proceeded previously from the roof of the building. The witness turned pale with fright as the mysterious voice exclaimed, "You are a liar." And again there was a great commotion in the "Corte."

Anne Hardy sat unmoved and self-absorbed, seeming to give little heed to the witnesses.

There was proof that chickens had been bewitched, for they were consumed within, water and worms being found in their gizzards. There was also proof that a great many cattle had died, and this was naturally attributed to the witch-work of the accused.

An important witness testified "that the woman had gone on a tract of lying." When a strange voice exclaimed, "Is that good proof?—then catch the other witches in 'Corte.'" A scene of great confusion ensued. The Governor and all his assistants arose to their feet and looked into the startled faces of the multitude with amazement. Not a lip had been observed to move other than the lips of the men engaged in the examination. And yet bold and contemptuous interruption had occurred this third time. The movement on the part of the "Corte" was followed by a moment of oppressive silence. Fear came upon the people. Then the Governor and his assistants again sat down, and the examination continued.

On the fifth day of the trial the climax was reached. It seemed a sad and cruel thing to do, but such was the necessity of the case. Sapphira Hardy was brought into "Corte" to give testimony against her mother. Master Johnes tried to save the child from such an act, but the "Corte" was insistent upon the value of her evidence, so that she was forced to appear. Sapphira entered the

meeting-house in the company of the minister and the constable. She was manifestly in a high state of nervous excitement. Her coming moved the throng of on-lookers with mingled feelings of distrust and compassion. For it was impossible to foretell the character of her evidence. It was believed, however, that did she have courage and liberty to speak the truth, her testimony would be the crucial point in the trial.

As the child stepped within the door there was a general turning of heads and a perceptible undercurrent of tragic interest. There was one head, however, that did not turn. The prisoner sat with downcast eyes, lost in wandering thoughts. As the child advanced amid a silence that was vocal with deep meaning, that same fearful, ghostly voice seemed to fling itself down from the roof and whisper in sepulchral tone, "Devils, laugh! A child will now swear away her mother's life." Sapphira shuddered and hesitated in her way. Then she became deathly pale and trembled like an aspen-leaf. But she advanced to the place where witnesses gave their testimony.

At this point Anne Hardy lifted her head and gazed fixedly into the eyes of her child. Sapphira seemed held by invisible cords. It was like the fascination exercised by a snake over its victim. Then the child fell to the floor in a fit, uttering little suppressed shrieks, twisting her body into strange shapes, frothing at the mouth, and passing at length into fitful unconsciousness.

The "Corte" was obliged to take a brief recess. The commotion extended to the multitude which encompassed the meeting-house. Half an hour elapsed ere the child was restored and the "Corte" was able to proceed with its business. The examination of the witness was most thorough and exhaustive. It was concluded as follows:

Question: "Sapphira, why did you laugh in meeting on Thanksgiving Day?"

Answer: "Because when Master Johnes said we must be thankful that there are no witches in Paradise I knew better."

Question: "How did you know better?"

There was a good deal of hesitation manifest in her reply to this question. She seemed to study how she might avoid a direct answer. But she could think of no way to evade it.

Answer: "I had seen a witch."

Question: "Where had you seen a witch?"

Answer: "Please, I don't like to tell."

The voice of the child betrayed great anguish.

Question: "Have you ever seen a black book in your house?"

Answer: "Yes, your Worship."

Question: "Tell us when you saw the book, and all about it."

Answer: "I saw it first when my mother was reading it at night. Ananias and I wondered what it was. We had heard about the black book. We watched her hide it in the chist. One night when she was taking care of John and Esther Johnes

she left the key of the chist at home, and we found it."

The prisoner lifted her head when this statement was made, and showed interest in the story of the child.

"I and Ananias got the book out of the chist, and put it on the floor before the fire, and read some of it. And it was a dark night, and we were alone, and it made us afraid."

Question: "What did the book say?"

Answer: "It told how to make witches. It told all about witches and such awful things that we were afraid."

Question: "What became of the book?"

The child glanced at her mother, who was observing her with close attention. Then she hesitated for a moment ere she continued the narrative.

Answer: "I and Ananias were reading the book,—how they make witch-broth and take babies that are dead and make ointment, and I looked over my shoulder toward the window, and I saw two great blazing eyes, like coals of fire, fixed upon us. And I sprang for the stairs, and told Ananias to come; and he came too, and there we stayed a long time. Then we crept up-stairs and looked out of the window, and there stood the Black Man still looking into the room; and I just prayed, and said we were baptized, and belonged to God, and told the Black Man to go away; and I raised the window and threw a

brick at him and hit him on the head, and we prayed and prayed. By-and-by we looked out of the window, and the Black Man was gone too, and then we crept down-stairs."

The interest in her story was intense.

Question: "What became of the black book?"

The whole company bent forward, eagerly awaiting the child's reply.

Answer: "When we crept down-stairs and went into the kitchen the book was gone, for the Black Man took it."

The sensation produced by these words was indescribable. Goody Hardy herself was moved with wonder and excitement. This, then, was the explanation of her loss of the black book. The frank, simple narrative of the child carried conviction to every mind. The very prisoner believed implicitly that Sapphira's story was true, and that the Black Man had really carried the book away, while the "Corte" was evidently prepared to bring the proceedings to an end for the reason that further evidence was unnecessary. Only one other question was put to the child.

Question: "Sapphira, do you believe that your mother torments you and that she hath familiarity with Satan?"

Answer: "Yes."

And as the child replied her voice died away within her and she fell to the floor in a swoon.

The mother sat as immovable as a piece of marble for a moment after the testimony of Sap-

phira was concluded. Then she arose quickly from her seat, looked in the direction of her child, gathered the whole assemblage in a sweep of her eyes, and poured forth upon them such curses as had never been heard in Paradise. One could think of nothing but the wild, senseless ravings of a lunatic. She struggled to reach the door in her passion of delirium. The "Corte" was in direst confusion and disorder. There was a hasty adjournment amid infinite noise and excitement. The prisoner was finally secured and taken under enlarged guard to her home.

The verdict of the "Corte" was given on the following day. The moment was one of intense solemnity when the word "Guilty" was pronounced. Anne Hardy assumed a statuesque appearance. Never a trace of emotion was discernible. And when death on the gibbet was the stern, awful sentence of the "Corte," the pent-up feelings of the multitude expressed themselves in a sort of suppressed, frightful groan which seemed to linger for long, with its horrible suggestions, in the heavy atmosphere of the crowded room.

XVII

The Witch is Pronounced Excommunicate by the Church

The rugged, thoughtful men of Paradise had cut themselves loose from the errors and heresies of the English Church and the Romish Church. They did not believe that the religious society which had been constituted in their town had any "powers of the keys," as that phrase has been historically construed by the majority of writers on the subject. Still they insisted strenuously upon church discipline. A person convicted of witchcraft must be pronounced excommunicate by the church.

Master Johnes visited the condemned woman on the day following the close of the trial. She was quiet and dejected in demeanor. He spake to her with all the gentleness and compassion of his sympathetic nature. It was in his mind to lead her unto thoughts of God, mercy, and redemption. She heard his discourse with noteworthy patience. It might have appeared to a close observer that her mind wandered during some portions of the earnest address. Yet she made no objections to any statement of doctrine or any appeal to con-

science and reason. She gravely acquiesced in all that was said on the occasion. At least Master Johnes so interpreted it, and he became hopeful. When he engaged in prayer she seemed really devout and heedful, alive to her condition and anxious concerning her destiny.

It was near the conclusion of the interview that she appeared to grow excited and nervous. One might think that the strain of religious conversation had been too much for her and that the effects were manifest in the changed demeanor. But the explanation was contained in the fact that she had something on her mind, and she had decided to free herself of it and confide in Master Johnes.

"Reverend sir," she finally exclaimed, "it seemeth wise for me to say to you what I would say to no other person living." She paused with something of doubt and distress in her manner. "But some spirit moveth me to speak with frankness. I may not be myself when next I see thee. For I prithee observe, Master Johnes, that I seem to be two selves, so that I know not at times what self or whose self I am. There hangs over my mind a darkening cloud, and it ofttimes settles heavily upon me, so that I am vexed and troubled beyond measure."

"And doth not the Word of God or the Divine Spirit give thee help in these hard, miserable hours?" inquired the minister.

"Methinks thee had best suffer me to speak without thy kindly interruptions," replied Anne

Hardy. "The mood may change ere I have ended, and God only knows (if there be a God) when such mood may return to me again."

It had come to be a most solemn, awful hour with these two people. It seemed to the minister that they were standing in the very presence of the living God. So he bowed his head with deep reverence and sent up many a heartfelt, passionate prayer. How did he long for the renewing, perfecting grace of the Master to enter that soul! How did he wrestle in spirit to the end that this woman might be snatched from the everlasting toils of the Devil.

"I am a most wretched woman," continued the prisoner. "My life has been a horrid nightmare. Almost the only bright and happy hours which I have known came to me when I was privileged to enjoy your friendship. Sir," she hesitated for a moment, seeming to consider the propriety of the words she was about to utter, "I did put love potions into your food just as Tituba said. I longed to win your heart and make you mine, for I cared for naught else in all the world."

Such a confession made Master Johnes exceedingly uncomfortable. A man does not like to be rude, unsympathetic, cruel when a woman tells him that she loves him, whatever the circumstances of such confession. The minister had visited Goody Hardy in prison that he might prepare her for the dread ordeal, the awful destiny of death upon the gallows. He was unprepared for

any interchange of words upon the subject of the love passion. It was out of harmony with the place, the occasion, and his own sincere, spiritual mood of great concern for a soul. And yet his native gallantry, and his fear that any cold speech of dissent or annoyance might provoke the wayward, fitful spirit of this woman, locked his lips and kept him in dire constraint. But the mind of the prisoner worked with rapidity and passed on to the consideration of other vital matters.

"Through these miserable years," she continued, "I have been a searcher into the mysteries of life. What books my narrow means enabled me to buy have been sent to me from London by an old and trusted friend. I did buy the black book and every other book that told of sorcery, witchcraft, and the Devil. And the Devil take 'em all. For methinks that Sapphira the minx told the truth when she said the Black Man took the book. I know the Black Man. I have seen him. He has talked to me. Such secrets as I have found in the books! How they would make the blood of that soft-faced creature, Mistress Stanley, curdle with horror! I'd like to read them to her. And I may yet see her mind 'set on fire of hell.' Yes, I went into the woods, and shall I tell what voices whispered to me and how the imps played with me in the shadows of the night and what wild works we did? Good Master Johnes, it is not for such ears as yours to hear these things, and I might have been saved then

had I not been driven to desperation by the woes of life. That same black book which the Black Man took back with him into the woods contains my covenant. I wrote it on a blank page or fly-leaf. 'I renounce the Christian faith.' That is one thing I wrote. Then I said, 'So help me Devil,' I will provoke God with all despite." At this point in her confession the woman arose from her chair in excitement and began to pace up and down the floor. The minister likewise assumed a standing posture, stricken with a nameless horror, impelled to shut his ears to the awful story of apostasy and waywardness, yet forced to restrain himself and think upon means of rescue and salvation.

"I am—What am I?" continued the prisoner. "I must needs confess to you, whom I love and fear. A horror of great blackness is settling down upon me. My soul belongs to the Devil. I can hear him laugh. Do you not see him there at the window? And now he is hidden in the parlor. How I hate him!" And she spake these words with a hissing like to that of a serpent. Then the woman gave way to tears and sobbed with a passion that was heart-rending.

"Go, reverend friend, go," exclaimed Anne Hardy. "The Black Man has come to torment me. He will soon have me in his arms and I shall scream and rave in my wrestlings with him," and as she spoke she motioned him to the door, her eyes grew bright and bead-like, and reason

seemed tottering on the throne. Master Johnes departed, torn in spirit, amazed and confounded by the woman's revelation.

On Sunday morning he preached upon the subject of demoniacal possessions. It was a lamentation, inexpressibly pathetic and soul-stirring. He referred to the fact that the Devil had come down upon the people with great wrath, essaying to extirpate the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The affliction was extraordinary. The presence of spectres was discussed and the various kinds of torments used. The causes for such invisible furies were exhaustively explained. The miseries engendered by association with the Black Man were described. Various incidents illustrating the methods pursued in wrecking the happiness of men and destroying the peace of communities were given. Then a most forcible application of the lessons suggested ended the discourse. At the conclusion of the service the people tarried in order to take action with respect to the condemned woman. It was propounded to the church, and it was by unanimous vote consented to (several people having withdrawn, however), that Anne Hardy, being a witch convicted by the 'Corte' and condemned to die, should be excommunicated.

When the afternoon service opened many people could not get within the room, such throngs had come to witness the strange, memorable scene! The prisoner was brought to the meeting-house in charge of the constable and his assistants. A

chain had been placed around her wrists, for she had been so violent on several occasions that her wardens found it a difficult task to restrain her from doing injury to herself and the people about her.

She was placed in the aisle in front of the pulpit, facing the minister and the deacons. Her behavior through the service was quiet and exemplary. The discourse was upon the text, "When I would do good evil is present with me," and the subject was treated with great skill and eloquence, the preacher having in mind the struggle which goes on in the soul as a sort of counterpart to the struggle which goes on in the world between God and the Evil One for the possession of the man.

There was one interruption to the service. The day was hazy and languid, a day when ambition was at low ebb and energy was not equal to sustained concentration of interest. The theme of the morning had such intimate connection with prevalent superstition that Master Johnes had commanded the undivided attention of his flock. But when the afternoon service had continued for two hours, the interest of some of the more weary members of the flock seemed to flag. This gave the tithing man his opportunity to drum the sleepers on the head and rouse them to a consciousness of their indecorum.

One of the tired and frightened women had given way under the severe strain of the day, and for a few moments she became oblivious to her

surroundings. It was at this period that the tithing-man tickled her face with a fox's tail which he used to awaken the women. The poor soul was dreaming of the witch-work which had been done in Paradise, and when the persistent tickling of the curious instrument startled her into semi-consciousness she referred the peculiar sensations to the interference of the Devil, thinking he was present for her special annoyance. Her wrath being excited, and dreaming that she might possibly chastise his bold Majesty, she made a sudden onset in the direction indicated by her dream, and screamed with furious energy, "Take that and that and that, Black Man!" suiting her words to a corresponding action and belaboring her husband in her wild delirium with a force that was almost superhuman.

The poor man kindly appreciated the situation and speedily quieted the demonstrative wife; but it was not until the whole congregation was startled into fresh terror and the woman had seated herself in dire shame and confusion.

Master Johnes had interpreted the situation on the instant, so that he continued his discourse without visible embarrassment. For more than once had he seen his faithful tithing-man exercise the functions of his office with similar results. It was a sort of relief and diversion from the great pressure of the occasion, so that for one moment the mind was freed from the dread thing which impended. Then the sermon continued,

the psalm was sung, and the moment of doom was upon them.

Amid a silence that spake deeper, greater things than simple words, Master Johnes spread the minute of the morning action upon the pulpit before him. The hushed congregation awaited the deliverance with a strained expectancy that was intensely painful. Little Sapphira Hardy was like one dazed or spellbound. While it was not perfectly clear to her just what was coming, yet a sense of awe and horror filled her soul to the full. Never had such a scene been witnessed in Paradise. It was interpreted as a practical banishment of a soul from heaven. The excommunicate was cut off from hope and given to the great Adversary of men.

So when the minister read the sentence of expulsion and the doom of a lost soul came home to the people in this fresh, fearful way, all words were inadequate to express the woful solemnity, the pathetic sorrow, the tragical alarm pictured upon the countenances of the people. It seemed like a veritable day of doom to many a man and woman. More than one person tasted the bitter cup of everlasting woe that day. For one minute of that sort of thing was unforgetable intimation of the fathomless misery of hell. And Goody Hardy bowed her head with a dignity and submission which appeared to say: "It is just and right. I am resigned to the awful fate that awaits me."

The very spirit and attitude of the criminal on

this occasion intensified the impressiveness of the action. While this woman was to all intents and purposes now cut off from sympathy and assistance on the part of men and separated forever from the friendship of God, yet the symbolic procedure wrought such a revulsion of feeling and made such appeal to the nobler instincts of the people, that many of them burst into tears, others moaned as if in great pain, and all hastened from the meeting-house impelled to shut out the sight from their aching eyes and forget if possible the dreadful ordeal in some distant place of seclusion. People did not tarry by the way as they walked dismally to their homes. And when their doors were closed and they turned eagerly to God's Word for comfort, they still seemed to breathe an atmosphere heavy with fear and torment, and hear the slow, measured, solemn tones of the minister pronouncing the doom of the woman.

But Anne Hardy returned to her imprisonment like one who had paid some portion of a penalty for mis-doing and therefore tastes a corresponding relief and satisfaction. The service had harmonized to a certain extent with her mood. She entered her desolate house and turned to the Bible. It occurred to her that now she had been given over to the Devil without reservation or chance of escape, it might be a good thing for her to outwit his Satanic Majesty, plead the mercy of God, and slip into the Kingdom of Heaven.

She was fain to confess to herself, to Master

Johnes, and to the Almighty that she had done wrong and was sorry for it; at least that was her feeling on her return from the last Sunday in meeting. She had denied that she was a witch since her arrest. But they did not try any popular tests for witchcraft in her case. Had they thrown her in the pond she would have floated like a cork and so proved her familiarity with the Black Man. She was a witch. She knew it and people knew it. She never thought to conceal the fact, although she denied the charge.

When she was first examined and later on her trial, she had tried to annoy her accusers and make the scene uncomfortable for them. The strange voices which she commanded, and which sounded from the roof of the meeting-house, were forms of disturbance that gratified her love of mischief or her feeling of spite.

All Sunday night she was reading the Bible and thinking how she might get the better of the Devil. When Master Johnes called Monday morning, the subject of conversation was this new plan of action which seemed to possess the woman. Her speech upon the subject was rational and suggestive, for Master Johnes and his people all believed in the reality of the Devil's presence. Goody Hardy was one with her times in respect to this phase of faith. So minister and criminal discussed the subject with the seriousness that later generations consider the laws of nature. The conversation was interrupted by a

sudden change observable in the face and manner of the woman.

"Reverend friend, you must leave me for to-day," the harassed prisoner suddenly exclaimed. "Did you not see that face at the window? You'll hear a double knock at the kitchen door in a moment. You see, the Black Man has come to torment me again. He keeps on the watch. Oh, why does he not leave me with you just a few moments longer?" And then the woman's eyes grew bright with fear and hate. She listened for the expected approach. A moment passed and then she exclaimed:

"Quick, do you not hear him knocking? I must keep my promise, for I still belong to him. But Master Johnes," and she turned toward the minister as he stood by the door, "we'll outwit him yet, mayhap." This was spoken in a whisper as she turned from the minister and looked with apprehension and repugnance toward the kitchen door whence she expected the Black Man's advent.

As Master Johnes stepped into the yard he took the pains to question her jailers in respect to any visitor that might have approached, but they told him that none had appeared other than himself. And certainly the minister had heard no knock at the door or other indication of the Black Man's presence. This of course was no proof that the Devil was not there, for he had a marvellous power of deception and concealment. He was

supposed to make himself invisible when he did the larger part of his wicked work.

Nevertheless it occurred to Master Johnes that the prisoner might be mistaken, or that it was a figment of a diseased imagination or the simple ravings of an unbalanced mind. He was disposed to return into the house and make investigation, when his steps were arrested by the variety of conversation which proceeded from the room he had just left. There were certainly two voices, and their words were hot and bitter. Indelicate sentences were borne to him and a strange medley of noises fell upon his ears. So he withdrew and returned to the husking at the parsonage, distressed in mind, troubled, and wayworn.

XVIII

A Letter Comes from London

On one of those October days when witchcraft, war with the Dutch, and general failure of crops were the themes uppermost in the minds of the Paradisians, there came a letter from London addressed to Master Johnes. It contained the invitation to minister to an independent congregation where many individuals prominent in the Commonwealth were accustomed to worship.

It came as a great surprise to the man who for years had been, as it were, estranged from these old-world associations. And it gave him peculiar satisfaction. The letter could not have reached him at a more opportune time. Not that he accepted the proposition contained within the missive on the instant. Not that he was prepared to desert his work and return to more congenial fields; but simply that remembrance was especially sweet and uplifting at this crucial period. When one is harassed and burdened there is comfort in the thought that relief offers itself and can be had for the simple taking. It helps one to stand up under the strain when there is a consciousness that we can exchange it the moment

we may elect. So Master Johnes was cheered and strengthened by the invitation to return unto the mother country.

And there were good reasons why the cordial invitation should be well considered, if not accepted. The pastor of the church in Paradise was an exile from home. He had left England on account of persecution. Early precious associations had been severed in order that he might worship God in accordance with the better way that had been suggested. Now all was changed. England had sloughed off royalty, prelacy, and their accompaniments of corruption. The mother-land was now governed by men of moral character and great native force. Prospects were fair for the reformation and the rejuvenation of the people. Master Johnes felt a natural desire to share this stupendous task. So he reasoned with himself.

Then the Stanley family were to return to England or go to the Continent, and he was not averse to becoming one of the party. It seemed to him that there might be a providence in it. For all through the summer days, when one affliction after another fell upon the settlement, there had been found little time to revive the days of early love, so that such an opportunity as now presented itself was one not to be lightly thrown aside. How sweet to return unto the scenes and enchantments of the past and make fresh beginnings in the way of life amid old-time associations and priv-

ileges! The preferment which he deserved would now be forthcoming. Not only would he hold a position of leadership in a metropolitan church, but academic life might likewise minister to his advantage and enjoyment. For he was to be a lecturer at the university where so many happy days had been spent, and he was to resume that fellowship of labor and instruction so congenial to a man of his nature.

But the prime inducement that moved Master Johnes to favor Old England rather than New at this important epoch was private and personal. He longed for the home which years ago he had pictured when in the morning of his love he dreamed the dreams that glorify the holy passion of pure hearts. He was serene and confident in his possession of the Lady Stanley's affection. And yet he doubted whether she would ever link her destiny with his in a closer relation than that of friendship.

There might be family considerations which would forbid it, for he did not know that he was the magnet which drew the woman to the shores of the new world. He felt it to be something in the nature of a condescension for a lady who had been wedded to a great nobleman, a lady who was the mother of a boy that would inherit high titles and vast estates (in case that kind of thing was not annihilated by the Commonwealth), to humble herself to his condition and retire to the obscurity which he must ask her to share. Love

was strong, rich, deep, and it was generous. He longed with intense longing for the joys and the inspirations of a home life which he had idealized; and at the same time there seemed the faintest prospect of its realization.

He had a child of his own and a child of the late Mrs. Johnes to rear. Then he had pledged his word to Goody Hardy that Ananias and Sapphira should be adopted into his family and given the same advantages enjoyed by other members of it. What woman of quality and refinement would be willing to forego the opportunities of life and subject herself to the narrow circumstances of such a condition?

At the same time it occurred to him that possibly the Lady Stanley might be willing to take such burdens in case he decided to return to England and once more assume the position to which she believed he was entitled. But was it fair and honorable for him to ask her to do such a thing? In his noble regard for her, it was suggested that such a course was nothing short of imposition. She might yield to his wishes in the very intensity of her devotion to him and his interests, and at the same time do that which would prove detrimental to herself and the interests of her family. Was it not, therefore, a duty on his part to relinquish her even did he return to England and assume the work that was inviting him?

Master Johnes was tossed to and fro by the cross currents of these mighty impulses. He spent

many hours in prayer. He took long walks in the deep woods. He sat late by the hearth in his study and tried to read the directions for his course in the infinite, beautiful play of the flames as they darted hither and thither in their wild sportiveness, twisting themselves into numberless grotesque shapes, licking up the wood with careless, confident air, writing vivid, startling hieroglyphics in shifting and evanescent splendor.

And what was the Lady Stanley thinking all these days? The return to England had been settled. Her brother-in-law was the friend and confidant of Charles II. The would-be king desired his help. His loyal subject was constrained to give it. But the Lady Stanley was passing through great straits. Return for her signified an equivocal position. Personal considerations placed her on the side of the Commonwealth. She was a Puritan, not averse even to the name of Roundhead; but family considerations urged her to sympathize with the Cavaliers. Were not all her own people and her husband's people among the Royalists? England for her, therefore, meant fresh trials and sacrifices.

There were certain possible circumstances which might alleviate these conditions and make her feel resigned to life in London; for example, a union with the man of her affection. She was not prepared to say to herself that she would accept the hand of Master Johnes did he ask her to be his wife. But hesitation did not

result from any distrust of their mutual love; her eyes had confessed the undying devotion of her heart. And he had not only read the confession, but she knew that it was like an open page to his quick vision.

She likewise knew by spiritual intuition the whole story of his struggle and discipline through the years, and carried with her the sweet consciousness of his fidelity. But was it right for her to bring him into the fretwork of sorrow and tribulation which made so large a part of her life? Trammelled as she was by the sad past, cursed as she had been in her relations with the great world of London, held now by obligations which restricted her beyond all conception, could she ever bring herself to that mood when she would accept him did he ask her hand? For it would mean nothing less than a great personal sacrifice on his part and the virtual forfeiture of his place and and influence as a minister.

When the news concerning the London appointment of Master Johnes was brought by her brother-in-law to Lady Stanley, the matter presented another phase. For a few moments her soul was jubilant. She thanked God for His help. It seemed to her that possibly the way was clear, but sober second-thought suggested to her that it would be a most unhappy thing for Paradise to lose Master Johnes. He had been settled for life. Never a thought or word in respect to change had occurred to him, she felt sure. And the New Eng-

land settlements now were receiving very few emigrants. On the contrary, several friends and acquaintances had gone back to England. Cromwell had invited them. Would it be right for the faithful shepherd of this stricken flock to leave them in their "sad and sinking circumstances," simply for the reason that he could better his condition and return to the privileges of cultivated society, books, art and old-world inspirations?

In case Master Johnes should ask her now to become his wife, having through the past months refrained from so doing because he was reluctant to bind her down to such a narrow life, would she be justified in accepting him on condition that he cross the sea and live in London? Was not such a course selfish and unworthy on her part? Did it not give her a sense of meanness and degradation as she reflected upon it? Was she to think so much of her own comfort and happiness that she would permit it to offset the vital prosperity of a community or the large usefulness of a consecrated man?

Her brother-in-law was deeply concerned. It was not that he said much upon the subject; but he watched closely the play of emotion and manifested the keenest desire that Master Johnes would accept the position so cordially tendered him. Mr. Stanley had suspected the true relations which this man and woman bore to each other. He had discreetly kept his own counsel, however, thinking that the time might come when they both

would serve his purposes; for he was simply a secret, plotting agent of the king, tarrying in Paradise a convenient season, prepared to enter upon active service when the word came.

The word had come that he was needed, and during these weeks he had given himself to such labors as might prove helpful to him when he crossed the waters and proceeded to the immediate attendance upon the King. It came to him on the instant when Master Johnes spoke concerning the invitation to a London church, that such an arrangement would serve him well. He wished to be in touch with some Puritan family of London. The minister of a metropolitan congregation must be placed in a position of commanding importance. What a happy circumstance did this sister-in-law become a parson's wife and give him a chance to communicate in person with certain individuals in the secret employ of Charles.

So Mr. Stanley expressed great satisfaction as he told the news. And when on several later occasions he discussed the matter with Master Johnes and Lady Stanley, it was to the intent that the change might be made and the minister installed in a parish worthy his ability.

During these days of indecision, anxiety, trouble, there was another sufferer closely related in a certain way to these two people. A condemned woman, shut into the prison of her little house, waiting the awful fate of the gibbet, kept thinking, thinking, thinking. Was it re-

morse, penitence, death, eternity, that absorbed her mind? No. They were not in all her thoughts. Goody Hardy was thinking upon Master Johnes and Lady Stanley.

Her loyalty to the minister was unswerving. Even in her worst moments there was never a word escaped her which might be construed as a reflection upon him. When the women of the parish visited her, they found one subject upon which she talked with calmness, reason, and enjoyment. Her sincere and honorable affection for him was the one beautiful thing in her life. All his kindnesses were repeated with words of tender appreciation. The genuine godliness of the man was praised in words of deepest feeling. She could not say enough in respect to his sympathy and helpfulness. He was a soul who lived on quite another plane from that common to her. He was far beyond her reach. She had come to exalt him in a way that was simply humbling to him, since no man felt his own unworthiness more keenly than Master Johnes. In the minister's visits the conversation was generally upon the great doctrines of religion, and the prisoner seemed well content simply to listen. These hours were the bright, memorable hours of her life. The ugly fate of the gallows was forgotten. She lived in the mere joy of his presence.

When others visited her she was moody and sometimes violent. She had little to say and manifested no desire for companionship or sym-

pathy. The few women who ventured to see her were repelled or abused. When she was asked to name others that had covenanted with Satan and joined her in serving the Black Man, she was silent.

It was evident that she held herself under some kind of restraint, for she appeared on more than one occasion desirous of making some statement to her visitors. It was inferred that other people were implicated in the practice of witchcraft, and she had simply to denounce the guilty ones, when measures would be taken to arrest them in their wickedness and visit them with the punishment that they deserved.

Now the conflict which waged in the soul of the prisoner was as wild and turbulent as ever waged in the heart of man. The woman was tempted of the Devil to do an awful deed. People believed that she was leagued with this Spirit of Evil and had done them great harm. They also believed that she could enlighten the community in respect to other individuals of the same character. And she was tempted to do it. Not that she had a list of names written in memory. There was only one name that stood forth conspicuously upon the tablet of her mind. That name belonged to the woman whom she hated above all other beings. It was the name of the woman that had robbed her, as she believed, of all earthly happiness and mayhap of eternal peace.

For she had known from the day when Lady

Stanley first appeared in meeting that the Lady Stanley held the heart of Master Johnes in thraldom. And she hated the woman for it with a rage and malice simply diabolic. It mattered not to her that people said she had annoyed and harassed the Stanley family. The thing she sought had been wellnigh gained. She was bound to drive them all from Paradise. What means she used were known only to herself. It might be that she had ridden on her broomstick in the air and mocked them with midnight laughter, hurled sticks and stones at their house, slapped them as they stepped forth in the darkness, rapped upon their walls and broken their dishes, destroyed their cattle, and set on fire their haystacks. These things had all been done, and Goody Hardy was not the one to say what particular form the Devil assumed in the doing of them.

The question which now pressed into her soul concerned the fate of the woman she hated. It was in her power to strike her to the earth. The Lady Stanley was not popular in the settlement. Goody Hardy did not reflect that it was her own insinuations against her that had made the English lady unpopular and distrusted. She now simply considered the fact of the woman's standing.

When it was told to the prisoner that the Stanley family had decided to leave Paradise, she muttered to herself that one member of the circle

might leave the town in quite another way than that which they anticipated. Not that Goody Hardy would take her by the throat or stab her some dark night. Simply that she must be denounced as a witch and murdered by the people themselves, a nice and easy way of ridding herself of the gentle supplanter, a fresh and interesting method of revenge.

The prisoner was wild with delightful anticipations. She pictured it all to herself. The sly, soft-faced, high-titled lady is first denounced. Then she is examined, and of course either denies the charge or refuses to make any statement. Did she confess, that would end the matter; but she was too truthful to make such confession. Then the mincing, lofty creature would be shut up in jail. Then she would be tried and the dying evidence of herself would be brought against Lady Stanley. Then came conviction, sentence, a dreary waiting, and at last, oh, sweet revenge! the woman is driven from the earthly Paradise to the heavenly or some other place. It mattered not to the prisoner if she might simply snatch her away from the bliss which had been stolen from herself.

It was such thoughts and plans as these that made Goody Hardy laugh wildly and distort her face, twist her hands into strange shapes, and gaze into space with the light of frenzy in her eyes. All that she had to do was to say that Lady Stanley was a witch. And the Devil bade her say it.

It was almost the day for her execution. The battle was still waging. Roger Ludlow repeatedly urged her to reveal the names of her associates. Her lips were seen to move, and it was said that a name was outlined, although the visitor had not yet ventured to repeat it. And then the prisoner laughed as devils are said to laugh, and she exclaimed, "Methinks the name will keep."

XIX

The Gnarled Oak on the Knoll Becomes a Gibbet

The day of doom dawned sour and chill. An east wind swept over Paradise, bringing its numerous depressing accompaniments. The gray morning lengthened into a dark and doleful midday; for the rain began to ride upon the winds and there was an uneasy, malicious sportiveness of the elements, as much as to say, "She shall rue the day," or was it, "They shall rue the day?"

Master Johnes had spent the night in fasting and prayer. He had walked and prayed. Then he prayed upon his knees. More than once had he thrown himself prone upon his study floor (a clean, highly polished, native-wood floor) and agonized for the soul of Goody Hardy. Great drops of sweat fell from his face. He clenched his hands and printed his finger-nail tips in the very flesh of his own body during these stern, awful exercises. Again and again he turned to the Word of God for light and consolation.

And why did he thus suffer? Was it not one of his own people who was to die on the morrow? He longed for the evidences of her salvation, for,

with all her faults and sins, she was a woman of certain merit and heart. There was good in her life, and he was ever hopeful that the good would vanquish the evil. It pained him beyond measure to think of her passing into eternity unsaved.

Then the revelations which she had made concerning her strange regard for him complicated his feelings. While he did not love her in any sense or with any sentiment like to that which marked his relations to the Lady Stanley, he still felt so deeply and bestowed such lavish sympathy and compassion on her that he was bound to the woman by certain sacred ties of Christian service and fidelity. Had she not given her children to him, and was he not to father them through the years before him?

At the same time the mind of Master Johnes was grievously disturbed by doubts in respect to the nature and reality of the crime for which the woman had been condemned. Lady Stanley was responsible for this unrest and agitation. Through all the weeks she had insisted strenuously that witchcraft was a snare and a delusion. She never believed in it. Goody Hardy was subject to recurring fits of aberration or insanity. Such a theory was satisfactory explanation of the various incidents connected with the annoyances which the Stanley family had suffered.

These views had been impressed with such urgency and repetition upon the minister that he was forced to consider them, and at length con-

fess their plausibility. Still he was not prepared to move in any direct way for the remission of the penalty, other than to urge the prisoner to make some public confession of her sin and ask for mercy—a thing which Goody Hardy refused to do.

The burden of the woman's soul, therefore, lay upon the heart and conscience of the minister in a twofold sense. He began to question the rightness of the penalty to which she had been condemned, feeling that her unjust death might be set against him and his people. And then he trembled and agonized, as only the true shepherd of a flock will do through intense desire for the saving of a soul.

The morning light gave opportunity to visit for the last time the unhappy prisoner. As he approached the dwelling, the watchman told him that she had spent a wild night. More than once had they feared that she purposed violence upon herself, and when they had sought to reason with her or keep her from such act, they had been dismissed from the room with the stern command to mind their own business. The struggle in which she engaged, as she told them at the last, was a struggle with the Black Man. Although no Black Man appeared to the heavy vision of the town officers as they watched and listened, they did hear many strange noises, and they also observed the woman in apparent conflict with some unseen antagonist. And the words which came

from her lips were often addressed to the unseen combatant which she insisted was struggling with her in the room.

As Master Johnes entered, he observed how the hard, rough night had left its impress of real warfare upon her, for she was weak and exhausted. His presence roused her, and then she told the brief story of the night's wild experience.

"He is still lurking about the house," exclaimed Goody Hardy. "When we go to the gibbet he has told me that he shall keep close by my side. Master Johnes, he hath said this very morning that my soul belongs to him and that he will have it ere the day is done. Oh, will you not keep me from him and save me from that hell into which he says that he will fling me?" And again the woman was torn with conflicting passions. Then Master Johnes prayed. It was the wrestling of a soul alive to the fact that the issues of eternity depended upon the result. And the woman for once in her life entered into the spirit of his supplication. The prayer was followed by the counsels of the minister, the reading of the Scriptures, and such words of hope as the Spirit moved him to utter, so that a gradual change became manifest in the countenance of the prisoner. As the time drew nigh when she was to leave forever the humble cottage, her demeanor assumed a quiet dignity that was most becoming.

The sad procession formed on the Green and moved eastward toward a knoll that guarded an

inlet of the sea. The poor criminal was placed in a cart drawn by two clumsy, massive oxen. The minister and the constables walked by the vehicle's side. The Governor and the magistrates followed. A company of men, women, and children completed the procession.

The winds seemed in pathetic accord with the occasion, for they moaned and groaned with a sympathetic vehemence that was almost human. It was said that the voices were the voices of the dead. The spirits of the unseen world seemed marching in the air above the sorrowful people who made their slow way to the knoll.

And it was truly a most wretched throng. There were those in the company that disliked the prisoner with a curious intensity of feeling. She had made life hard for more than one woman. Her tongue was always sharp and ready so that it was felt on all sorts of occasions. And yet the people who harbored ill-will against her were very few.

It was the hard belief in witchcraft that made the larger part of the onlookers accept the sentence as just. And they marched to the little hill that dismal, wretched day that they might see a woman who was in wicked league with Satan put beyond the bounds of further mischief in Paradise.

But the first, cruel, bitter feelings had passed away. Neighbors had become to a degree pitiful and reflective. Not that they doubted the justice of the sentence or the reality of the crime. Simply

that humanity asserted itself and the manifest misery of the criminal appealed to the better mind of the community.

The wind and the rain increased in violence as the procession came to the knoll. The sea appeared to catch the spirit of the hour, for it beat upon the shore down at the foot of the field with a dull, heavy, cruel thud that was suggestive of shipwreck and heart-break.

It was at this point in the march that a shrill voice bade the woman confess her guilt and name the people who had sold themselves to the Black Man. For the first time on the way she spake to the people.

"I must not say anything which is not true! I must not wrong anybody."

The cart was brought to a standstill when she uttered these words. And Master Johnes observed with a sudden thrill of gratitude that a new light shone in her eyes. The old wild, frenzied look was gone. The later tragic, hunted expression had also disappeared. There was a gentle, womanly expression, a look of humble, piteous resignation manifest.

"Tell us the names," exclaimed one of the women who had visited the prisoner in her jail and urged upon her the giving of testimony against suspected neighbors. "If you keep it a little longer till you come to the ladder, the Devil will have you quick." This speech kindled something of the old-time spirit, for Goody Hardy replied

with some sharpness: "Take heed the Devil have not you, for I cannot tell how soon you may be my companion." This swift retort hushed the interruption, and the procession continued along to the top of the knoll.

It was a conspicuous rise of ground, and there stood upon the crest of the outlook a solitary oak that had died first at the top. The lightning had picked the ancient, gnarled tree for its sharp stroke so that it was a strangely suggestive object. For the upper part of the tree had been thrown from its position, the great, thick trunk stood naked against the sky, and a single twisted, ugly limb thrust itself forth at right angles from the huge carcass. It was a natural gibbet. Many a passer-by had gazed upon it and wished that another lightning stroke would fell it to earth, for it had long pressed its hateful features upon the eyes of travellers and citizens, and to every one it had spoken in symbol concerning the fate of law-breakers and the terrors of death on the gallows. A rope had been thrown over this projecting limb and a simple staging was constructed beneath it.

The procession reached the gibbet, the poor criminal climbed the ladder and stood a few feet above her neighbors, and Master Johnes, having ascended with the officers of the law, stood close by her side. It was then that the long-expected confession was made. But what a disappointment to some cruel and malicious spirits who had looked for something startling, malevolent, or vindictive!

"I have been fished withal in private more than you are aware of. But I must not return evil for evil," she said. "I have naught to say in public confession," she continued. And the rain beat with such pitiful force upon her face and the wind sounded with such earnest, mournful notes in the ears of the people that her words were almost lost. "I shall say what I have to say to Master Johnes." Then the woman hesitated for a moment, and at length turned toward the minister. The brief address to Master Johnes was printed indelibly upon his memory.

"They wish me to denounce my neighbors. But thanks to your brave soul, I have this day gained the victory," she said. "There hath come to me such temptation as doth not often assail a woman. It hath been in my power to strike the one who has robbed me and blasted all hopes of happiness. Through these weeks have I fought the battle with Satan. He hath bidden me revenge myself on her that I have hated. Shall I say to yon multitude that the Lady Stanley is a witch? Her life is paid as forfeit, for then she must die upon this gibbet."

As these words were spoken the heart of Master Johnes had almost ceased to beat. Such wickedness seemed to him inconceivable. It was nothing less than diabolic. His cheeks blanched with fear. He held his breath with horror. He drew back from the criminal with awful revulsion of feeling. He fixed a gaze upon her

that was wild in its passionate anxiety and entreaty.

"I give her back to you," she huskily said. "I have gained the victory. Pray that the Devil do not overcome me with his craft. I hope the Lady Stanley is an honest woman. Pray for me. Pray for me. I know not what I am. Methinks I have sinned against my fellow-men and I ask forgiveness. But I say not that I am a witch. I seem to be two women. And when the darkness settles upon me, I remember little which I have said or done. Is there a God? I do believe it. And you have led me to Him. Pray that He receive my soul. The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much, you know." And the woman closed her eyes while the minister prayed.

Then he descended from the gibbet, her arms and limbs were pinioned, the clothes bound about her ankles, the noose adjusted, and as the black hood was being placed upon her storm-beaten head she turned again to the minister and said pathetically, "Pray."

Again Master Johnes gave himself to supplication. His voice was lifted up on wings of the wind and carried far and wide. Great, sonorous, heartfelt words were tossed hither and thither on the shifting, playful currents. The sibilant haste and break of the swift descending rain could not drown his piteous entreaties. The whole multitude instinctively stood with

closed eyes and mellowed hearts as the good man poured forth this last prayer for the sufferer. It was a long, soul-piercing appeal for mercy in behalf of the dying woman and for compassion upon the people of Paradise. And when it was ended, the lifeless body of the condemned hung limp in the air, the heavens were deluging it and all the company with cleansing waters, the winds were seeking to loose it from the groaning tree, while the onlookers were hushed into an awful silence of solemn, inexpressible wretchedness.

The strange, dread fascination of the scene was broken by a female voice crying:

"Let us search for the witch-marks," for this was one of the undeniable evidences of complicity with Satan. So the body was cut down from the tree, and three women hastened to make the desired examination.

"We have found them," they shrieked above the confusion of winds and waters. "Here they are." And it was true enough that the little moles and warts called "witch-marks" appeared upon the body of the deceased.

Then the people began to disperse and the darkness thickened in the heavens.

The executioners meanwhile carried the lifeless form down to the road that led to the little ferry across the inlet far above the mill. Here they dug a hasty, shallow grave, and, wrapping the body in its Camblet cloak, they thrust it into the ground and covered it with the wet soil. A

few of the neighbors watched the sad task, and then all hurried through the increasing storm and made an unhappy way to their homes.

Master Johnes, bowed down with grief, returned drenched to the skin, and entered his house. The children had awaited his coming with infinite sorrow and distress. He could only gather them to his arms and comfort them by the lavishment of his sympathies. Then they all joined in prayer and sought eagerly the counsel and support of God. As the night settled down upon them and the town, it was felt that it would be a memorable night for more reasons than one.

The storm multiplied its furious power. It was said that the air was filled with the emissaries of the Black Man. He was angry and had now come with all his forces to wreak his vengeance upon the settlement.

The houses shook with alarm. The cattle lowed in terror. Every living thing seemed to creep away into some hiding-place. There were many people who asserted that they heard the clash of arms and the noise of battle between spirits.

The riot and confusion of the elements passed all imagination. The very trees gave way in weak distress and snapped asunder like young saplings. They moaned and creaked in fear and seemed to supplicate the hideous assailants of the air with all tender beseechings, but it availed not. The leaves were stripped from them, the

branches torn away remorselessly, their trunks bent and broken, until the town was strewn with sad wrecks of old forest monarchs.

The barns were thrown down like pasteboard structures in the hands of children. Roofs were lifted from more than one dwelling and carried far into the country. At midnight a great, unseasonable thunder-storm added its force. The lightning played wildly above the town, touching with its hot finger now a tree, now a haystack, now a house, so that its lurid stroke was followed by several little conflagrations which illumined the thick, savage darkness and cast horrid shadows into the sight of the men who ventured forth into the night. And the sea was lashed into a mood of unparalleled frenzy. For when the tide came in, it seemed to forget all former bounds of restraint and push eagerly, cruelly, persistently for the settlement until one and another house was surrounded, outbuildings were caught up and carried out to sea, fowls and flocks were overwhelmed in their usual resting-places, the mill was loosened from its foundations, and people prepared for an escape to the hills did the waters encroach further upon them.

It was a night that went into history as a night when the people of Paradise supped full of horrors. Little sleep for any citizen. Fear, sorrow, agony for the worn and harassed Puritans.

The storm subsided toward the morning. When intimations of light shot into sight along the east-

ern horizon, the sky had cleared and the weather changed to a crisp, sharp air. As the sun climbed out of the sea and crept over the low hill, it was to gild and glorify a scene of matchless splendor.

For the havoc of the storm was covered or forgotten through the magic work done by multitudinous frost fingers. Iridescent hues streamed from every bush and brake, each stalk and tree, the ice-tipped buildings and the vast landscape of shimmering beauty. The sky was cloudless, and the deep blue hung above the town whispering peace.

The sun came onward with its cheerful light, inviting men to think of joy and strength and life. The glad invigoration of the morn quickened fresh spirit of purpose and hopefulness. People began to move about like those who have just wakened from some distressful dream to find that it is all a dream and rejoice in the fresh opportunity of life. The day and the night that were gone seemed far away and unreal. The people of Paradise had lived intensely through the wild, weary hours that were broken by the advent of this virgin, autumnal day. They still spake with something of hush and disquiet in their manners, yet the nightmare was in good measure lifted, and they thanked God for a perfect morning.

Some of the village boys were drawn by curiosity to seek the spot where the witch had been buried. They stole over to the knoll in the middle of the forenoon. That which they first noticed was

the fact that the gnarled and twisted gibbet oak was stricken to the ground and torn into a thousand pieces. The lightning had finished the work which it began long years before. The ugly object against the sky would never again suggest the things of crime and death.

The boys followed the way trod by officers of the law when they carried the body of Goody Hardy to its ignominious burial. But when they reached the place they discovered no traces of a new-made grave. There was the path which led down to the waters, but where was the freshly disturbed soil? So they hastened back to the village and reported the strange fact.

The men who had dug the hole and placed the body within it returned in company with the boys and a little knot of interested onlookers. As they stood close by the spot their faces became blank with amazement. It was true. No trace of grave or fresh-turned soil was discernible. Some one suggested that the Black Man had snatched the body from its rest and transported it to his own place. It was currently reported on a later day that such was the established fact. And the Black Man was said to have blasted the ancient oak and shivered it into countless pieces. Others said that the tree was stricken by the lightning as a testimony from God to show His curse upon the crime of witchcraft. While the disappearance of the grave and its body was explained by the fact that the tide swept high up the little

path which led down to the water's edge, uncovered the thin soil that had been strewn hastily above the body, and carried the fragile piece of clay down to its own embrace, changing the very front of the shore and obliterating all evidences of the crime. It was claimed that God taught the people His abhorrence of the thing through such singular providence.

But Lady Stanley said that if there was any special significance to the curious event, it meant that God condemned the whole sad tragedy and that He desired to wipe out all traces of it from the town.

There would seem to be something in this view of the case, for it is a fact that the records of the examination, trial, and sentence all disappeared at a later date. There remained only a dim tradition for generations, until an antique journal kept by one of the townsmen of the early days was discovered by some of his descendants and passed over to the uses of this unvarnished narrative.

XX

Lady Stanley Walks upon the Reef and is Overtaken by the Tide

And now came Indian-summer days in the Colony of Connecticut. The sunshine of the year was apparently reserved for this tranquil, exquisite season. The people of Paradise remarked that there had never been seen such autumn days. Nature was given over to her happiest mood. Calm, bright skies, gentle breezes that whispered words of rest, an atmosphere that suggested peace, such was this memorable Indian summer.

There also came to the people of the settlement a kind of blessed Indian summer for the soul. The strain of life had been intense through the year that was gone. A reaction was bound to follow. It assumed the form of a singular, inexplicable repose.

One might anticipate a period of remorse, anxiety, and spiritual unrest as the natural result of the experiences through which the people of Paradise had passed. Would not the Black Man multiply his annoyances and persecutions in order to show his anger? As these things did not

continue, there were people who said the Black Man evidently did not have the power which was ascribed to him, while others said that he was not able to discover a suitable agent for his services in the community.

Then it occurred to various people that God might visit the settlement with a curse to express His disapproval of the course pursued with Goody Hardy. For there were a few doubters encouraged by the Lady Stanley to think that the "Corte" and the people had been over-hasty in their dealings with the reputed witch.

Yet the days and weeks flowed serenely along, bearing down upon the stream of time the sweetest, richest joys of all the year. The crops had proved better than the farmers expected. The various plantations were put in excellent condition. Apples were abundant enough to supply common necessity and make a fair portion of cider. Sea food proved to be unusually plenteous. Trade took a sudden impulse and promised very satisfactory returns. Even troubles with the Dutch began to assume a less hostile aspect, and there was talk of peace.

The Lady Stanley had been in New Haven during the week that bounded the day of doom. The work of the gibbet, familiar as she had become with it while in old England, had peculiar horror and repugnance for her, so that she had fled to friends in the neighboring shore town. And she was to go back to Paradise for a few

days, then join her brother-in-law in Boston and proceed across the sea. Little did she dream that her life had hung by a slender thread through these days of conflict on the part of Goody Hardy. For there were people prepared to credit the reports circulated in respect to the character of Lady Stanley; and a dying statement and accusation on the part of the witch would have cut the thread of her life.

She returned to Paradise and tarried with a neighbor while the final preparations for the long journey were making.

The beach had been a favorite place of meditation for her, although it was a place not often visited by the women of the community, for the Puritans had little time for pleasures, and many lonesome walks along the sands would have been counted not only a waste of time but an act of immodest and unwomanly behavior.

On one of these glad Indian-summer afternoons she walked down to the mill and then slowly followed along the beach and made her way out upon the reef which pushed for two miles into the sea.

She was thinking of the days when love was fresh and hopeful; and she was likewise thinking of the days when love might turn into its sere and yellow leaf. Could it be that time would obliterate the image of this man? Neither time nor eternity. And yet she had won a great victory of soul, as she called it, and was now prepared

to relinquish him forever and go back to the hard, exacting life of her station in the motherland.

She would not have Master Johnes leave Paradise for her sake. Attractive and magnificent as were the opportunities which presented themselves to the minister did he return to a great church in the city of London and exert his gifts in behalf of righteousness and the Commonwealth, yet she could not but feel that in all probability the place of Master Johnes was in Paradise. Her own selfish nature was in such perfect accord with his that the path of duty and privilege, she felt sure, would appear to him to lie in a continued fidelity to present relations. Not for the world would she move him to go contrary to his own sense of rectitude and obligation. Her happiness was nothing in comparison with his conscientious loyalty to a God-appointed task.

And yet departure and separation signified a continuance of the grief, the joylessness, the drudgery that had marked the years of her married life. It is true that she had children which might absorb her. But the two boys had passed beyond her control. They were to be educated in ways that accorded with the station for which the father's family believed them destined. It was little of them which she might ever expect to see.

The girl was her great comfort, and the advantages of London schools and English society were

things worth consideration. But Paradise was a congenial home and a safe place for such a child. The girl had been happy as she played the simple games permitted, and mingled in the quiet, decorous life of the community. Why should she desire to thrust her into the vortex of agitated, fitful life in old England?

Picking her slow way along toward the extreme end of the narrow, stone-strewn reef, the absorbed woman had failed to note how the tide had changed and was now coming in with stately, measured advance. A cool wind had come with the flowing tide so that the waves dashed upon the shore and threw themselves against the rocks with a merry sound. The sky began to redden with the fast-sinking sun, and the waters were dyed with richest hues of gold and saffron and purple.

It was this glory of manifold colors and the song of rising waters that finally diverted the attention of Lady Stanley from herself to her surroundings. Suddenly she observed that it was nigh to the evening hour, and she was afar from the settlement. And then she observed that she was far out upon the reef with an incoming tide making swift encroachments upon the slender piece of sand and rock which gave her footing. For a moment her cheeks blanched, her limbs seemed to give away, and hope died in the heart. Was it possible for her to fly across that rough, cruel, uneven path and reach the shore ere the

reef was swallowed by the tide, and all access to the mainland was cut off?

She gathered herself on the instant, feeling that one second might signify her salvation. How lurid-frightful seemed the sea which had just spoken to her in tender accents and lulled her into all forgetfulness of time. She could not bear the thought that life must now go out for her in the lonely, darksome waters. And what agony would be added unto the burden of him who loved her better than his own life when the battered, hideous body was cast upon the shining sand?

"O God! save me!" she cried, and her cry pierced the very heavens and rode far upon the friendly winds. For the winds were friendly to the Lady Stanley in her awful peril. They carried that cry to the very ears of the man who was in all her thought. He too had gone down to the sea for meditation as the sunset approached. With bent head and knitted brow he strode forward toward the reef, revolving in his mind the course of action to be pursued, and the questions of duty and privilege presented by his circumstances. And he had reached the conclusion that Lady Stanley must never sacrifice herself and her family interests for him. It was not right for him to ask it. It was a mean and subtle phase of the selfishness which he had long striven to uproot and destroy. But it tore his soul to think that after all these years, when for an hour or a day he had thought that God was giving him back

that blessed, holy love of first, beautiful manhood, he must now lose it and tarry amid the disappointments and disasters of his broken life.

But whose voice was that which made wild and pitiful appeal? Clear, strong, terrorful, it seemed to command the winds and use them as its chariot of fleet approach. He lifted his head and looked out into the sea. How his heart thrilled and then ceased to beat in its paralyzing fear! He knew the form, distant as it was and clad in the changeful glory of the setting sun.

"Give me wings, O God!" he exclaimed. "Stay the incoming tide. Clothe thy servant with the strength of Him who rideth upon the winds and walketh upon the sea." Then this man sped across the sands, drew nigh to the channel which had now cut off the reef from the mainland, sprang into the waters, and lifting up his voice in one great, reverberating note of rescue and good cheer, swam sturdily, mightily through the waves. Meanwhile the water-encompassed traveller had run with all the strength which she could master, bruising her feet against sharp rocks, tearing her clothes as now and again she fell in her weakness, some of the time making her way on the sands which still stood above the tide or springing from rock to rock with the swelling tide surging in between the dark places.

At last the sands had disappeared, and one after another the rocks sank out of sight and the poor woman was left to battle with the rough waters

themselves. They were waist high and then they sank for a moment to the knees. Another step and she was plunged in to her armpits, and then again she came against a hidden rock and was thrown down in an agony of despair. But she was once again upon her feet, seeking to make some little progress, and then the waters surged about her, she slipped, the salt spray dashed into her face, her long hair was caught by the frolicsome winds and waves, and tossed back and forth between them; then came a voice, great, strong, blessed, hopeful, and then the waves took her into their keeping, her head went down into the dark sea, and she was lost to consciousness.

Master Johnes had bravely breasted the waves and made quick progress through thickening waters. He had watched the struggle which engaged her, and when he saw her slip and sink he had shouted words of encouragement. He was now close upon the Lady Stanley, and as the waves lifted her unconscious form he grasped it with firm hand. Then he turned him about and set out for a return to the shore.

The winds and the waves favored him, but it was a hand-to-hand contest. There were moments when it seemed that they must both go down forever. Wave after wave rolled over him in the effort to sustain her body and keep her head above the water. Could he reach the shore? And then he remembered that there were shallow places where he might find a moment's

footing and get breath. Assuming an upright position, his feet touched the bottom and he rested. Then he pressed once more for the shore, straining every nerve, fighting the waters with renewed courage, borne onward by wind and tide until again his feet touched bottom, and with a "Thank God!" that came from the inmost sanctuary of his soul, he slowly trod his way up to the unwashed sands.

He had sufficient strength to lay the body with tenderness upon the beach, and then for a moment he was weak and almost helpless like a child. But as he looked upon that limp, stark form, his strength returned to him. He kneeled in the sands and chafed the wet, cold hands. With sudden, irresistible impulse, he bent over the woman and printed upon her face a kiss that was electric with the restrained, passionate love of many years. The eyes of Lady Stanley opened. Life surged through her frame. She raised herself into sitting posture, gazed confusedly for a moment into the startled, piteous face which was so close to her, and as memory awakened, exclaimed: "John!"

"Dear heart," was the reply. And the two souls plighted anew their troth in this sacred hour of rescue.

She had simply lost consciousness through terror and weakness. And Master Johnes, having brought her safe to land, recalled her to life by the touch of his lips. It was all done in a mo-

ment. But there are moments which mark experiences that are not to be measured by time. The moment when these two people came forth from the realm of impending death, and first realized how they were linked anew by fresh ties of consecration for life, was the supreme moment of all their days. And they lived with a marvellous rapidity through that sweet, brief ecstasy of love. For all the plan and resolution in respect to divergent ways was cast to the winds.

"The Lord hath given thee back to me and thou art mine forever," said Master Johnes. And Lady Stanley replied: "The Lord hath sent thee unto me in my distress. I give thee that is thine."

The moon had been peering forth from the edge of the eastern sea, and now the pale, silvern glow enshrouded all the scene. Just as Lady Stanley rose feebly from the sand, helped and supported by Master Johnes, the light fell upon them like a fresh baptism unto mutual service and devotion. And then as the chill of the evening air struck them, they realized afresh the perils of the past hour and the immediate need of help. It was a long way to the house of Master Johnes, and his was as near as any. Yet they must make the way as best they could with drenched garments and enfeebled limbs.

The minister made light of the task.

Did he not have strong arms and had he not carried many a burden in them? So they started

down the beach toward the lane which led up into the settlement. But Lady Stanley faltered and leaned heavily upon the supporting arm. In weariness and alarm she clung to him with the little strength which remained until at length she slipped from her support and dropped heavily to the earth. She had fainted through sheer exhaustion. Then the minister caught her in his arms just as he had taken his own child many a time, and hastened toward beach lane with all the energy of a man fresh to a hard day's work in the open field. For the evident exhaustion of the woman alarmed him, and he felt the necessity to bring her to the nearest place of succor.

They were two strange-looking figures as Master Johnes pushed open the door of his house and presented himself in the great kitchen. There was a crackling, sociable fire blazing away on the roomy hearth, and seated in a semicircle about it were John and Esther, Ananias and Sapphira and the child of Lady Stanley. Tituba had spread the supper-table and it was well loaded with good fare. The children were waiting anxiously for the coming of Master Johnes, when the sound of his footsteps was heard and they all rose expectant, watching for his entrance, ready to reply unto his kindly greeting. As he appeared before them, he still supported the inanimate form of the rescued woman. The water fell in occasional drops from their clothes. Hatless or hoodless,

with dishevelled hair, torn garments, death-like faces, the man and the woman stood forth in the genial, riotous light of the great wood fire. The child of Lady Stanley sprang in terror toward her unconscious mother. But Master Johnes soothed her with his gentle speech, bidding all hands turn to and assist him. Then the lady was placed upon the hard floor, stimulants and restoratives applied, and consciousness returned. It did not take long time for Tituba and the girls to bring back warmth and comfort to the sufferer. Meanwhile Master Johnes had attended to his own needs, changed his garments, and then explained to the children the accident which had overtaken the Lady Stanley.

All things were now on another footing. For the brief courtship on the shore had settled the question of future relations in respect to these people. They were once more affianced. And there was a mutual feeling that Providence had taken matters out their hands and led them to a wise and happy decision independent of all planning and reflection on their part.

When supper had been eaten and they had given heartfelt thanks for deliverance on this eventful night, the minister hastened to Mrs. Gold's, at whose house the Lady Stanley had been tarrying, and explained her absence and the circumstances connected with it. Then Master Johnes walked to the home of Roger Ludlow and invited Mrs. Ludlow to spend the night at the parsonage with

the unexpected guest while he tarried with his friend the magistrate.

The morrow was Sunday. But news of the accident had spread through the town. It was a wide-awake congregation that faced the preacher. And he was likewise awake to the significance of the occasion. When it came to the reading of bills and notices, he requested the congregation to join in thanksgiving for the singular escape of the Lady Stanley. And then he read his own bill announcing the intended marriage of the pastor of the First Church of Christ, in Paradise, to Hester, widow of the late Lord So-and-So of England.

And did he not pray with fervid, impassioned, luxuriant spirit that the blessing of God might rest upon the elect lady? And did he not pray that the favor of God might visit Paradise and make the town to abound with all benediction? And did he not give thanks for divine mercies and dwell upon the loving ministries of Providence in both prayers? And did he not preach from the Canticles again and take for his text "Thou hast ravished my heart," showing that the holy passion which flames in the pure souls of Christian men and women is a most beautiful and glorious type of the divine love relationship between Christ and the Church his bride?

XXI

A Town-meeting is Held, and the Magistrate Solemnizes a Marriage

The minister tarried at the home of the Governor, while the Governor's wife assumed the headship of the parsonage family for the days which intervened between Sunday and town-meeting eleven days later. For the Lady Stanley was ill. She was suffering from the shock given her system, so that it was deemed best for her to remain in the minister's home. Master Johnes had willingly given over the charge of his domestic affairs to several of the Select-women of the parish while he bided the issue of events in the home of his friend the Governor.

But the minister was given the privilege of visiting the parsonage each day, and it was on Monday that he stated his case to Lady Stanley. There had been little time to discuss plans. They had simply decided to be married on the first day that the law and the strength of the Lady Stanley permitted. Hence the banns had been declared.

But Master Johnes remembered that evil stories had been circulated in respect to the character of this noble woman. He knew that she had failed

to gain popular confidence and affection. He therefore did not wish her to remain where she might be unacceptable to the people and feel compelled to face the intangible prejudices of her sex. Just what amount of injury had been done to the Lady Stanley by the cunning misrepresentation and cruel innuendoes of Goody Hardy is was impossible for him to say. But this thing might prove an insuperable barrier to happiness and activity in Paradise.

"Providence shall determine for us whether we shall abide here or return to England," said Master Johnes as he sat in the parlor on Monday afternoon while talking with the Lady Stanley. The children were all present. And they noted the conversation with keenest interest.

"You must make no sacrifices and change no plans on my account," observed the lady. And then, thinking simply of his duty, she continued: "Methinks it were better for us to stay where we are. You are needed. Who could do your work in this most critical period of life in Paradise?"

"I warrant you that God hath many workmen better fitted for such task than His unworthy servant here. Methinks there is work for me to do in London. And the life will be in sweet accord with your own spirit of service." For it must be confessed that the Lady Stanley had not yet adjusted herself to pioneer conditions, and she had signally failed to reach the sympathy of the

people or engage with them in common work for the good of the community.

In her own sphere she had been a remarkably useful and energetic woman. During her stay in Paradise her hands seemed tied, and people did not receive her into their comradeship of service. So Master Johnes proposed the change.

"Honored friend, I cannot think that such a thing commends itself to your better judgment. Thy heart is too well known to me to believe that such a course is freely chosen. Hast thou not some other plan?"

"I prithee, Madam, had we not best leave it unto the town? There follows after lecture Wednesday week, our town-meeting. This will give me opportunity to say to this people how I have been invited to transfer my humble services to the city of London. If they vote to release me from this present charge, may we not consider it a Providential indication that we are to return to the mother country? While if they vote to have me continue in their service, may we not take it as the will of God that we remain?"

"Yea, thou art wise and good, esteemed teacher. Be it even as thou sayest. We will pray that God direct the event." And thus it was decided to refer the matter to the arbitrament of the town-meeting.

This method was a happy commitment of their way to the Lord. It was also a happy way for the people to show their feelings in respect to

the marriage which the minister was speedily to contract. If the Lady Stanley was a woman that they distrusted and disliked, they could rid themselves of her presence by voting to release Master Johnes from his pastorate. If the new wife was one whom the people would welcome and make at home, they might show it by their hearty and unanimous vote that Master Johnes should continue with them.

The town-meeting was a very important function in the life of the Colony. As Church and State were one in Connecticut, all public affairs, both sacred and secular, came before the same citizens and were considered now in the capacity of a spiritual organization, now of a political. It was bald democracy in both cases.

The town-meeting followed the Wednesday lecture, and Master Johnes tarried to open the session with prayer and make his simple statement to the people. Usually he was an important participator in the lively debates and the routine of business which filled the time, but on this occasion he thought it best to withdraw, that the citizens might not be hampered or influenced by his presence.

The Governor was made chairman of the meeting. The clerk produced his writing material and seated himself at the communion table to take notes. Prayer was followed by the brief address of the minister, in which he simply and clearly stated the case. Then he left the meeting.

There were numerous trivial matters to discuss on this occasion. Several men asked the consideration of the town in the settlement of boundary lines.

The recent depredations of wolves was noted, and a vote passed that "any one who kills a wolf in town, if he expects to be paid for it, shall bring the wolf's head to the treasurer, who is to keep an account thereof."

It was also voted to pay any one who kills a bear "fifty shillings apiece for each old and for cubs twenty shillings each."

It was also voted that the "schoolmaster have £10 toward his wages out of the town rates, and it is ordered that the £50 that remain out of his wages shall be paid by the masters and parents of such children as need teaching from six years old.

A committee of two was appointed "to go to each family in the town and make trial what scholars are to be payable scholars to the schoolmaster, and bring in a list of the names to the secretary that there may be a rate made to pay the schoolmaster."

The Mill rates were likewise voted. The attention of the town was called to the fact that strangers had recently been entertained without permission of the constituted authorities, and it was voted that "Whereas it appears that several persons entertained into several families of the Town without leave of the Town, con-

trary to an express Law of the Colony, the Town order the Marshal that he shall forthwith give warning to such persons in the Town who entertain any such without leave that forthwith in twenty-four hours after such notice they give no further entertainment to any such persons, and if they shall notwithstanding such notice continue to retain such persons, that they shall expect to have the penalty of the above Law exacted on them as well for time past as for the time to come." Then "a new man was appointed to beat the drum for the year ensuing for the use of public meetings," and a committee of two chosen "to stop out the rain (or snow) from the meeting-house, and to fasten what is necessary above the minister's and soldier's pew, and to keep the rain from beating in at the window, all at the Town's charges, and to furnish planks to finish the floor, and John Patchin is appointed to keep order among the boys."

These various items of business being settled, the question of Master Johnes' marriage and his continuance of the pastorate in Paradise was freely discussed. And then it was observed how strong was the hold which the godly man had gained upon his people. What would Paradise be without the parson? As some of the citizens asked the question, they groaned in spirit. Was there a man, woman, or child who desired to see Master Johnes leave them? The very proposition begot a panic in the soul.

So there ensued a brief yet beautiful season of matchless eulogy. One and another man reverted to the faithful services of the minister in various circumstances. They spake of his unselfishness and generosity. They told incidents illustrating his patience and kindliness and good-will. They called to mind his wise counsels, his noble sympathy, his brave grand spirit. They referred with pride to his good farming, his helpful neighborliness, his attendance upon the sick, his service to the afflicted. They talked of his eloquence and scholarship, how he was the equal of any preacher in the Colony, and what knowledge of public affairs he possessed. They said much concerning his thrift, usefulness both in Church and State, and the downright manliness of the man. They testified to his unfailing cheerfulness and genuine spirituality. His stanch Calvinism was noted, for had he not told them how he read a brief passage from the Institutes each night ere he retired, and how he rolled it like a sweet morsel under his tongue? And thus the hour was spent in a frank, spontaneous, inspiring exercise of giving testimony to the worth of the minister and their deep, true affection for him.

When it came to the question of marriage, it was observed how a spirit of romance had moved these rugged Puritans so that they responded to the novelty and charm of the situation without the slightest hesitation. They seemed fired with

something akin to love itself when the story of Master Johnes' early betrothal and disappointment, the long years of broken faith and hopeless restraint, the recent shifting of circumstances and the renewal of old-time pledges, was told them with earnest, impassioned speech by Mr. Nathan Gold. There was a restrained yet intense feeling of sympathy, encouragement, enthusiasm excited that flushed the faces and dimmed the eyes of many a citizen. A town-meeting would seem to be the last place on the face of the earth for the quickening and overflow of sentiments connected with the tender passion. It is easier to think of the Selectmen going about the town for the purpose of catechizing the children and making note of their religious condition (in accordance with one of the provisions of Ludlow's Code) than to think of these stern, industrious, hard-headed pioneers yielding to any show of love emotion within the walls of a meeting house—when all the men were gathered "to attend to the Town's occasions." But such is the remarkable and interesting fact.

When the vote was taken it was unanimously voiced that Master Johnes should remain in Paradise. And then the meeting did a curious thing. They voted the Lady Stanley a marriage portion of five hundred acres of land, and instructed the Selectmen to help the parson fence the property and see that such other aid was given as "seemed fitting in the premises."

Amid confusion and unexampled jubilation the town-meeting adjourned, and the whole assembly of men, headed by the Governor, the three Select-men, and the seven Townsmen, and the guard which had stood outside the meeting-house during the session, marched in a body across the Green to the house of the man whom they had this day honored with their continued confidence and their enlarged affection.

Master Johnes heard the tramp of their feet as they approached the parsonage. He met them at the door. It would have been in keeping with his usual courtesy and good-will to invite the company into the house; but it was already filled. For the women could not find it in their heart to go home when matters of such moment were to be discussed by their men-folks in town-meetings. Therefore had they taken this opportunity to tarry at the parsonage and pay their respects to the Lady Stanley. A great revulsion of feeling had taken place on their part within the week. Else the men-folks in the meeting would not have ventured such gratuity to Lady Stanley with an expression of their esteem.

The committee of Select-women had interviewed her at the parsonage, and she had told them the story of her courtship with Master Johnes, followed by her enforced marriage with her dead husband. And then she had told them how the years had burdened her with sorrows, and how at length the Lord had given

her back to the heart that had ever possessed her. As the simple narrative flowed along on the strong current of her pathetic emotion, the women yielded themselves to the infinite charm of her fine nature, and when it was ended the Lady Stanley was taken into their common life with a cordiality and devotion very sweet and comforting to her broken spirit.

As the minister faced the company of men gathered before him, the light of the warm hazy afternoon bathed him with its mellow glow and clothed him in a kind of rich, subdued glory. Roger Ludlow advanced and greeted him. Then the secretary of the meeting or town clerk read the vote of the town declaring it to be the unanimous mind of the people that Master Johnes remain in Paradise, and then the vote bestowing a gratuity upon the Lady Stanley in acknowledgment of their respect for the woman who was now to wed the minister.

Master Johnes bowed his head, lifted his hands, and said, "Let us pray."

At the conclusion of his supplication, he asked the Governor to enter the house with him. They were absent from the multitude gathered in the yard a few minutes when they re-appeared, bringing with them the Lady Stanley. But it was Lady Stanley no longer. During the short absence within doors, the Governor had joined Master Johnes and the widow Stanley in holy wedlock, and when Master Johnes presented her to the

waiting company, it was with the words: "This is Mrs. Johnes, my wife."

Did the men give a cheer? And was this Paradise? For the strange events of the day seemed to have stirred the people to unwonted actions. Every face was lighted up with hope and joy. There was abundant cider in the kitchen of the parsonage. And mirth, good-cheer, gratitude, burst the bounds of staid formality and overflowed tnto words of happy fellowship and deeds of loving kindness. For an hour there was the commingling of heartfelt greetings, loyal wishes, pledges of service, exchange of sweetest courtesies, and then ihe people dispersed, and the minister and his wife with their children and their step-children and their adopted children, a singular medley of domestic relationships, were left in quiet possession of the new old home.

THE END

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